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his aff son
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1/2 Room Mr. Seider
for J. E.

SERMONS,

UPON THE

1830

MINISTRY, WORSHIP, AND DOCTRINES

OF THE

PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH,

AND

OTHER SUBJECTS.

15-

BY G. T. CHAPMAN, D. D.

RECTOR OF CHRIST CHURCH, LEXINGTON.

LEXINGTON, K:

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, } TO WIT.
DISTRICT OF KENTUCKY, }



BE it remembered, that on this twenty-seventh day of October, in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and twenty-eight, and in the fifty-third year of the Independence of the United States, GEORGE T. CHAPMAN, of the said District, hath deposited in this office, the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as author, to wit :

"Sermons, upon the ministry, worship, and doctrines of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and other subjects, by G. T. Chapman, D. D. Rector of Christ Church, Lexington."

In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States, entitled "An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned." And also the act entitled "An act supplementary to the act entitled "An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned, and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

JOHN H. HANNA, Clerk of the District of Kentucky.

Wm. Harrison

TO THE
RIGHT REV. JOHN HENRY HOBART, D. D.

BISHOP OF NEW-YORK,

AS A CORDIAL TRIBUTE OF ESTEEM FOR HIS TALENTS AND LEARNING; OF VENERATION FOR HIS PIETY AND BENEVOLENCE; OF APPLAUSE FOR THE UNWEARIED ZEAL AND ABILITY DISPLAYED BY HIM, IN DISCHARGING THE ARDUOUS DUTIES OF THE APOSTOLICK OFFICE; AND OF ADMIRATION FOR THE FERVOUR AND DEVOTEDNESS, WITH WHICH HE HAS IDENTIFIED HIS OWN PIOUS DETERMINATION, WITH THE INSPIRED VOW OF ISAIAH, "FOR ZION'S SAKE WILL I NOT HOLD MY PEACE, AND FOR JERUSALEM'S SAKE I WILL NOT REST, UNTIL THE RIGHTEOUSNESS THEREOF GO FORTH AS BRIGHTNESS, AND THE SALVATION THEREOF AS A LAMP THAT BURNETH;"

THIS VOLUME IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY THE

AUTHOR.



PREFACE.

IN submitting this volume to publick inspection, my motives appear in the body of the discourses, and to them the reader is referred, instead of being solicited to wade through a tedious preamble. Had I consulted mere literary reputation, their publication would have been delayed. My parochial and academical duties have made such large demands upon my time, that to the composition of each discourse, I was unable to devote more than the labour of a single day, and the whole have been committed to the press with no alterations, and very few additions. I do not present them as faultless specimens of style. In this aspect, neither do I challenge the severity of criticism, nor do I deprecate it. As no man is compelled to become an author, if he will write, let him be prepared to meet the consequences. It is better, that he should receive a little wholesome chastisement, than that his works should contribute in any degree to vitiate the publick taste. The writer makes no humiliating appeals to the sympathy or forbearance of reader or critick.

It was at the suggestion of a highly valued friend, that the sermons upon the Church were prepared, and their delivery was accompanied with repeated requests for publication. I have complied. With what judgment, time will show. It has not been with reluctance. A mind, unstable as water, may well sit down and count the cost, attending the utterance of dubious speculations; but he must be the veriest coward, who is afraid to preach and to publish what he solemnly believes to be true, lest, for combating the errors, he should be obliged to endure the censures, of the many. I know not, that the present discourses will be deemed worthy of a reply. Care however has been taken to notify me, in a formal manner, that such was the intention. Be it so. When a temperate answer appears, I hope to embark in the subsequent discussion with benevolent and charitable feelings. I know, that I shall do it, in all the confidence of a certain faith, that the leading facts and arguments, presented in this volume, are utterly incapable of being refuted. Every thing

plausible, that can be alleged in opposition, is perfectly familiar to my mind, and I have no difficulty in pledging myself to its exposure, wherever reason is permitted to triumph over prejudice, and religion over party. I only ask of my worthy Christian brethren of other denominations; those, whom I esteem for their piety, I only ask, that they raise not the shout of victory, until the battle is won.

The miscellaneous discourses have been selected in haste, from a large number written at different periods. I am apprehensive, that the choice of subjects may not have been as judicious as my friends could wish; but such as they are, let them be considered the humble offering of my head and heart in the glorious cause of Christ. If a favourable opinion should be formed of them, by the publick, they will, with the divine permission, be followed by others, embracing more extended views of Christian faith and practice.

LEXINGTON, OCT. 29, 1828.

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SERMON I.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

THE prophet, in the commencement of this chapter, breaks forth into the most sublime eulogy, and indulges in the liveliest anticipation of the future glory of the Church of Christ. He predicts the arrival of the period, when all nations should have cause to rejoice in her. "The Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all Kings thy glory." He bestows upon her no fulsome or vain panegyrick. "Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God." He describes the final prosperity, which is to attend her. "Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be Desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for," and he here gives the signification of these terms, "for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married." He foretells the ardent love, which should be borne her by the ransomed of the Lord, and the Lord himself. "For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." He unfolds the future anxiety of her ministers to extol and glorify her and her bridegroom Christ, until she become the praise of all the earth. "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night." "The Lord hath proclaimed unto the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before

him. And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken."

These however, Brethren, are predictions, that as yet, are only in part fulfilled. The bridegroom has indeed come, and with him, his bride, the Church. She has put on her beautiful garments, and furnished abundant evidence, that she is "all glorious within." And still the world lieth in wickedness, still the great mass of mankind know nothing of the spouse of Jesus, they have not come to the wedding supper of the Lamb, they have not penetrated into her bridal chamber, her more brilliant triumphs, her more extended conquests over the hearts of the sons and daughters of men have yet to ensue. They have yet to bow before her shrine, and enable her as a chaste bride to present unto her Lord, "the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession."

When these glorious things, which are spoken of her, the city of the living God, are to be fully realized, I know not. I pretend not to unravel that web of prophecy, which completely shuts out the future from the ken of mortal eyes, so far as precise dates, and times, and seasons are concerned. But this I know, that in confident expectation of these things, such confidence as was produced by divine inspiration, Isaiah looked down the long track of intervening ages to their accomplishment, and even at the remote period, in which he lived, determined with the most ardent zeal to contribute all in his power to effect it, all in his power to hasten, as it were, the approach of that truly auspicious era, when all from the greatest to the least should be pervaded with the knowledge of the Lord, and be able to "say unto Zion, thy God reigneth." Hear his own solemn and impassioned vow. "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."

And I require no better authority to justify a similar vow on the part of the present watchmen upon the walls of the Church, the present Stewards of the manifold grace of God. The lapse of time should inflame rather than cool their ardour in a cause, so holy and so good. As every day brings us nearer and nearer the consummation devoutly implored by the faithful in Christ Jesus, when

the full-orbed splendour of the Sun of Righteousness shall shine upon the nations, and bring them out of darkness into marvellous light; so should there be greater and greater anxiety to be counted of God worthy of this calling, to fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness and the work of faith with power.

As one of the most important preparatory steps, I have ever considered a closer union and harmony among Christians to be eminently desirable. For a long, long time they have exhibited to the wondering eye of angels a sad and melancholy spectacle. Their divine Lord and Master enjoined, that they should love one another; but no people wrangle more. It was his counsel, that they should attend to the weightier matters of judgment, mercy, and faith; but no Jews were more tenacious of the mint, anise, and cummin of the law. It was his command, that they should learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart; that they should not judge, lest they be judged; but no Pharisee could have looked down upon a publican with greater disdain and self complacency, than the disciples of Jesus now do, upon each other's attainments in the graces of religion. "I am noliier than thou," is their most prominent motto; the spirit it engenders enters into all their actions, and furnishes but too much reason to the enemy to blaspheme and say, "See these Christians, how they hate one another."

And now I ask you for the cause? The leading cause of this strange and unnatural antipathy existing among those professing the same faith, having the same common Master, and looking to him alone for the mercy of God unto eternal life? You will reply, that it is to be traced to the region of the heart, to its still proverbial corruption, its wonderful inclination to retain something of its original taint; as if it were possible to be too wise, too holy, and too happy here below. And I acknowledge the justice of that reply; I have no idea of attempting to controvert it. "Out of the heart," says our Saviour, "proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man."

And yet it is apparent, that as in the natural, so in the moral world, secondary causes are continually producing their good and their bad effects. And in this point of view, was the question already suggested, proposed to me, I should and I do answer, that the immediate active cause of all that dissention and disunion, so pre-

valent among Christians, is to be referred to gross departures from primitive, Apostolick, and therefore divine institutions. They have proved the fruitful source of all error in doctrine, and all error in life and practice. They have made the multitude wiser than God, and the Christian part thereof wiser than Christ. How often, for example, do we hear natural religion preferred to revealed, by men who have found out, that while nature never contradicts herself, the scriptures, in the mouths of their warmest advocates, are made to speak variant doctrines and to inculcate opposing practices ! How often do we hear it asserted by men, of whom better things might be hoped, that the separation of Christians into different denominations is decidedly favourable to the advancement of religion, and the spread of the Redeemer's kingdom ! I agree to the sincerity of their belief. I am far from intending to charge them with wilfully entertaining opinions hostile to the enlarged prosperity of Zion. But where do they get them ? Where have they thus found out the mind of God ? To the law and the testimony : Show me some authority from them, and I may be induced to credit what I am now forced to consider visionary fancies and unfounded assertions. Show me, that God approved the separation of the ten tribes from those of Judah and Benjamin, and the establishment of a new Church, in which the priests of the house of Levi had no office and ministry. Show me, that Christ highly applauded the divisions subsisting between the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and other Jewish sects during his eventful life. Show me, that the Apostles commended the schism of the Gnosticks, the Nicolaitans, and those, who in their time perished in the gainsaying of Core. Show me this, and I will bow with reverence to the word of inspiration ; I will rejoice in the countless multitude of religious sects, which exist in the present age.

But every attempt to point out such commendation would be utterly fruitless and vain. It is no where to be seen in the sacred volume ; it is no where by anticipation applied to the future, to a state of things resembling our own. Christ Jesus our Lord never says, Divide ye yourselves, my Brethren, into divers parties and denominations. In this way, ye shall the more successfully build up my Church, and add to it daily of such as shall be saved. On the contrary, he tells them, that "there shall be one fold and one shepherd." He directs this prayer to heaven in their behalf,

“ Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.” He submits this strong and conclusive argument to prove the necessity of union and concord, “ Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.”

Nor did the Apostles inculcate different sentiments. When they went about evangelizing the world, they did not set up, as our modern reformers, the Church of John, the Church of Peter, the Church of James, and from these names bestow distinct appellations upon their several disciples. All these things have been the result of a new flood of light, unknown to them, as it was to the Master whom they served. They rather discountenanced all schism with as much zeal as they discountenanced all heresy. Ye cannot fail to remember how solemnly St. Paul, in particular, remonstrated with the Corinthians on this subject. How affectionately and earnestly he delivered unto them this counsel; “ Now, I beseech you, Brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my Brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you?” And in a subsequent chapter he rebukes them in these terms; “ Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.”

And do you desire better evidence than this, brethren, to convince you of the danger of schism, and the extreme fallacy of imagining that our numerous Christian sects have a happy tendency in promoting the interests of religion? Paul does not condemn those Corinthians for imbibing unsound and heretical doctrines; such as are contrary to the true faith of Christ in the judgment of the modern orthodox. He speaks of them as believers. He says to them “ All things are yours. And ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.” But for this he does condemn them. For this he does call

them carnal. For commencing those very separations and divisions which are now so highly extolled. For doing precisely what Christians do in modern times; saying, I am of Calvin; and I of Munster; and I of Wesley; and I of Fox; with innumerable others. Christians, who in this particular, take no warning from the explicit language of Paul; who never hear his yet whispering voice, emphatically asking,—“Is Christ divided? Was Calvin, or Munster, or Wesley, or Fox, crucified for you?”

I know, brethren, that I am now treading on tender ground. But the times require, that I should speak out plainly and directly. It can never with justice be said of me, that I would gladly lay an interdict on the indulgence of any doctrines, or on the expression of any sentiments. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind, and according to that persuasion, let him preach, rebuke and exhort. He shall receive no abuse, no molestation from me. And what I accord to others, I claim for myself. The liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. The liberty of honestly entertaining, and honestly and charitably publishing my own views of Christian doctrines and Christian institutions, without being accountable to any human being, but to God alone. I do not question the piety of numerous individuals, belonging to Churches of human origin and invention. I do not assert, for my own conscience would condemn me if I did, that they cannot become the heirs of eternal life. I am rather sensible, that the Apostle applies to those divisions and parties, which existed among the Corinthians this remarkable expression; “If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.” And hence I abjure the thought of consigning to everlasting perdition large bodies of men, numbers of whom I am happy to believe live under the influence of the divine grace, and evince great advances in faith and holiness. But at the same time, this does not convince me, that there is no such sin as schism, however ignorantly it may be indulged. It does not abstract from the scriptures nor from my faith, that memorable admonition of Paul, “there should be no schism in the body,” and again, “ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular;” that body, which he elsewhere terms “the Church,” and affirms of Christ, that “he is its head.”

No, no, I have no conception, that liberality and candour towards

others imply, that we must embrace their errors, and renounce in their favour truths, which have their foundation in the wisdom of God, and that are revealed to us and our children, that we may embrace them with a ready mind and in the confidence of a certain faith. I rather look for divine authority in things, which may have been originally indifferent, and when I discover this, it is as obligatory upon me, in relation to the external, as it is to the internal concerns of the gospel. If Christ directed water to be used in baptism, it is not to be relinquished for another fluid. If he employed bread and wine, as symbols of his crucified body and blood, and commanded them to be taken in remembrance of him, they are not to be abandoned for other substances; although, in either case, I am not prepared to say, that a person baptized with milk, or communing upon flesh and milk could not therefore be received up into glory.

And this train of reasoning is equally applicable to the Church of Christ. If he, by his Apostles, has established one, giving it such distinct and characteristick marks, that it may be clearly discerned, and easily found, it is not for man to cast it aside, and relying upon his own wisdom to proceed in forming another and another, just as caprice inclines, and peculiar views and partialities preponderate. Nor is that a good and valid argument to justify such a course, which appeals to human sympathy and asserts, we are all aiming at the same result; all these different roads terminate in the same heaven; we shall agree there, however we may disagree here. I am rather of the prophet's mind; "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth." I wish to learn what God himself hath ordained, and if the bible tells me this, I have no faith in the words or the things, which man's wisdom teacheth. I have no faith, that he can improve upon the gospel or upon the Church of Christ.

We are told by some, that there is no such being as the devil, and no such place as hell; that the Son of God was but a mere man, and that there is no virtue whatever in his alleged sacrifice and propitiation for sin. But with me, one word from God destroys all these human fancies, and I am ready to exclaim with an Apostle; "Let God be true and every man a liar." We are told by others; Our Church is as good, 'ay, it is better than yours; it has discarded those higher orders of the clergy, which lord it over God's heritage and has banished all those popish forms and ceremonies, which we

so perversely retain. But when I look into the bible, and find it to be the very Church established by the very God and the very Christ; I call to remembrance the words of David; "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." I am animated, as I trust, by the same spirit, which dwelt upon the lips, and glowed within the heart of Isaiah. "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."

Too much, indeed, of worldly wisdom appears to exist among Christians. The children of light have succeeded in becoming as wise, in their day and generation, as the children of this world. Nothing is more common than to hear them talk of pleasing men, more by this method than by that, of adopting new paths rather than the old, because they harmonize more with the prevailing impulse of publick opinion. It is not so much what God says and Christ says; but what will the publick say, how will the publick think, and what probability of success is to be entertained, not from relying upon God; but from yielding, to a greater or less degree, to the known prejudices and infirmities of men. Our Saviour, for example, enjoins upon his disciples; "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven." "But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly." But now, as if entirely dissatisfied with this divine regulation, long lists of charitable donors to missionary and other societies, are continually published to the world, on the ground of expediency; on the ground of encouraging others to give from the expectation of having their names as generally known and extensively circulated. But for my part, Brethren, I do most solemnly protest against these implied improvements of the word of God. It is doing evil, that good may come out of it. It is but a new version of the old doctrine ascribed to the papists, that the end sanctifies the means. I am the advocate of missionary, the advocate of bible societies; but let them be conducted in strict conformity to the plain injunctions of the scriptures,

and without that manifest distrust of Providence, which such measures do not fail to indicate.

Similar remarks apply to female exhibitions in publick. They are becoming more and more common, and are supposed to produce better and better effects. In vain does the Apostle in his epistle to the Corinthians require; "Let your women keep silence in the Churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the Church." The rule is often transgressed without fear and without compunction. Paul's authority is regarded as little as his Master's. We have enthusiasts, who arrogate to themselves the right of rejecting the express words of scripture. Policy is their plea, although every sober and reflecting mind must be satisfied, that the only true policy in religion is to be found in reverent obedience to the oracles of God, even when they give directions apparently inimical to its increased prosperity. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord."

And these sentiments I cherish to the same extent in relation to the primitive Church. Founded by its divine head, I can never consent to abandon it for any, that have grown up within the memory of man, or whose claims to antiquity are bounded by the history of two or three centuries. I can tell you the fallible men, by whom they were devised, the places where they were first established, and the gradual progress they have made in stealing away the hearts of the people from the one only Bride of Christ. But for her, if ye wish to learn her origin, ye must go to the gospels and epistles. She has her foundation upon the Rock of Ages, and other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid. She may be despised and rejected of men; it was the fate of the bridegroom himself. But let them do this, or whatsoever else it may please them; they can never induce him to repudiate her. They can never prevail with him to accept a second bride, in preference to "the Church," which "he loved and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word; That he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

From these observations. Brethren, you must perceive, that the

present discourse is merely introductory to a series upon the same subject, which I propose to deliver on the morning of as many sabbaths, as may be necessary to complete them, and in which I design to give as condensed a view as possible of the Apostolick Church, at whose altar it is my happiness to minister. Those features I mean, which serve to distinguish her from the various protestant denominations of our country. By the divine blessing, I will prove from the scriptures her divine origin. I will show, that her three orders in the ministry, and particularly the Episcopal order, spring from the same holy and unerring wisdom. I will endeavour to convince you, that in some other important particulars, such as the holy rite of confirmation, and the use of precomposed forms of prayer in the publick worship of God, she conforms closely to the pattern of heavenly things, exhibited in the sacred volume.

Nor shall I omit the testimony of the Christian fathers; of those men, who either lived in company with the Apostles, or who succeeded them in the ministry during the first centuries of the Christian era. Many of their writings yet remain, and from them it will appear, that no other Church, but our own, was ever heard of, by those who first believed in Christ. They maintained the same principles of ecclesiastical authority and government, which are maintained by us. They had the same three orders of bishops, priests, and deacons in the ministry, and of these, bishops alone possessed the power of ordination. It was neither claimed, nor exercised by others. It would have been deemed unscriptural and unauthorized; a usurpation of power never granted by the great Head of the Church, and therefore conferring none of the attributes of his ministers, no authority to preach the word, or administer the ordinances of the gospel.

In performing this service, in which it will be necessary to examine every supposed objection, to recur to the records of history, and to speak freely, though I hope discreetly and advisedly; I shall be guided by a sense of duty, by a desire to put you in possession of every material fact required to arrive at a correct decision in your own minds, and by the expectation of its contributing in some degree, however slight, to the prosperity of a Church, built upon the foundation of the Apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone. It ought not to excite unpleasant feelings in any bosom. It is not intended to excite them. My great object is, to

inculcate the principles of the Church among those, who compose my own congregation. Religious controversy I ever have and ever shall deprecate. But the fair, open, manly, and peaceable investigation of truth must not be denied to the Christian minister, and this I shall adopt and pursue in a manner as unexceptionable as my own infirmities and the nature of the subject will allow. It certainly does lead me to the conclusion that ministers, who are not episcopally ordained, are acting as such, without any lawful authority; but this has always been the doctrine of the Church, and as is also contended, the doctrine of the Apostles and primitive Christians. Whether I shall be able to satisfy you on these points must be left to your own future judgment. In the mean time give me your patient attention, and be determined to embrace the truth as it is in Jesus, however it may comport with or contradict opinions already formed.

Amid the multitude of sects into which the mystical body of Christ our Saviour is now rent and divided; a circumstance so foreign from his doctrine, and so opposed to the holy counsels of his Apostles; it surely must be an object of extreme solicitude to every honest and sincere believer in him, to ascertain where his ministers rightfully exercise the functions of the priesthood; where they rightfully preach, and baptize, and celebrate the supper of the Lord. You shall know, so far as my humble powers and diligent examination will allow me to promise. It is a topick to which I have already devoted many hours of calm, dispassionate study, and the result has confirmed me in the opinion, that schism is the greatest curse of Christendom; that it is attended with more fatal consequences than the united attacks of infidelity and vice, and that the world will never be converted to Christianity, until its present professors discard their existing animosities and divisions, and cordially unite together in the Church, which is thus described by St. Paul; "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism." "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free."

May God therefore of his infinite mercy direct us into that Church, whether it be Presbyterian, or Baptist, or Methodist, or Episcopal. May he possess all Christian people with light to discern, and readiness of mind to embrace it. The wounds of many

festering hearts would be healed. The jealousies of many bitter partisans of rival standards would subside. The joy of all the faithful and godly in these denominations, and many of other communions would abound. Peace and order would be substituted for rancour and strife, for confusion and every evil work. In due time, the heathen would hear of it and be glad. The news would be wafted upon the wings of the wind. Messengers of grace and love would carry it to them in every direction. There would be none to molest or to make them afraid, convinced as all men would necessarily be, by this happy fulfilment of the sure word of prophecy; convinced as all men would be, that the Lord God Omnipotent reigned, that the Zion of his beloved Son was indeed deserving the praise of the whole earth, and that "her righteousness ought to go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth." AMEN.

SERMON II.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusatem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

THE ardent affection and zeal for the welfare of Zion and Jerusalem, expressed in these words by the prophet Isaiah, combined with the object of these discourses, already announced, render it proper to remark, that the two names are equally applicable to the Church of the living God.

Zion signifies, "a monument raised," "a heap of stones set up;" Jerusalem, "the vision of the perfect or of the pacifick," "the vision of peace, or the possession, or the inheritance of peace." The latter name was given to the city of David, which contained the temple of the Lord God of Israel, and the former was applied to the

mountain upon which it was built. "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth," says the Psalmist, "is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge." Its application to the Jewish Church pervades the old testament, and in the new, the Apostle Paul applies it from Isaiah to the Christian; "As it is written, Behold I lay in Zion a stumbling stone, and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." He also speaks of "Jerusalem which now is," and of "Jerusalem which is above;" in this manner designating the Church militant and the Church triumphant.

In perfect coincidence with the language and feelings of Isaiah, I may therefore express the warmth of my attachment, to what I believe to be the true Apostolick Church, in his own devout and fervid vow; "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."

The scriptures of the new testament are, indeed, full of encomiums upon the organized society of the disciples of Jesus, which is there emphatically described as the Church. Having reminded you of several upon the last sabbath, I shall merely recite upon the present occasion, the solemn declaration of our Lord to one of his Apostles; "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The object is not to contend against the peculiar interpretation of this passage maintained by our fellow Christians of the Roman Catholick persuasion; but in every attempt to discuss a controverted subject, it is important to understand the precise import of terms. What then did our Saviour mean in this celebrated text by his Church? It has been defined, an assembly of faithful men, of believers, of true Christians. But the definition is not strictly correct. For the traitor Judas belonged to it during our Lord's ministry. Simon Magus was baptized into it by Philip, one of the seven deacons, and among other parables, Jesus put forth one, in which he described it, as a field containing wheat and tares, and said, "Let both grow together until the harvest." So that to speak of his Church, as comprising those only, among the various denominations of Christians, whom God shall perceive and acknowledge to be faithful and true, is directly

at variance with this description, and the two examples which have been adduced.

I prefer therefore a more scriptural explanation. I prefer to consider that portion of men, who have submitted to the holy rite of baptism, as constituting the body of Christ's Church, no matter what may be the real state of their hearts and affections. This can be known to him only, who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins. But that which is visible is known to us. On the one side, we have the world, and on the other those, that have been taken from it, and sacramentally admitted into the Church, of which Christ is the head, because he purchased it with his blood, and because it is a kingdom over which he exercises supreme power and authority.

The great, the all important question remains however to be discussed. Baptism is undoubtedly the initiatory rite or sacrament, by which we enter the visible fold of Christ; but how is that fold itself established? Where resides the instrumental power of conferring its gracious privileges upon the sons and daughters of men?

Will you tell me, Brethren, that any men or set of men can perform all this, in virtue of their own free will and pleasure? It would be a very popular doctrine, and would harmonize wonderfully well with that spirit of freedom, which built up, and still perpetuates our political institutions. And no man can honour that spirit, or love those institutions more than the preacher of to-day. Most cheerfully and most heartily do I recognise the principle, that in the civil concerns of this life, all power and sovereignty reside, and of right ought to reside in the people. They can form what government they choose, and they can alter it when they choose; whenever indeed the happiness and prosperity of the larger number loudly demand a change. Herein they are the sole judges and the sole rulers. The Almighty hath set no limits to their power, except that it be exercised in justice and equity. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

While however I am thus anxious to range myself on the side of those, who zealously maintain the political rights and privileges of mankind on the subject of self government, I am no such enthusiast in favour of human liberty, as to imagine, that it can justly arrogate to itself the smallest original authority, where God hath expressly reserved it to himself. Popular or not popular, Christ

Jesus is with me. King in Zion and Lord of all. "Thy throne," O Christ, "is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." And that throne and that sceptre, the throne and sceptre of a kingdom, which is spiritual, which he himself declared was not of this world; these, he hath never relinquished, these, he never will relinquish until in the language of Paul, "the end cometh, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet."

And I desire no plainer testimony than this, to prove the inability of mere men to establish his Church, and commission his ambassadors, as they would establish a new form of government, and commission its executive, legislative, and judicial officers. For this purpose they have neither warrant nor example from the scriptures. The Jewish Church and priesthood were the result of divine appointment alone, and the Christian stand upon the same foundation. "Jesus came and spake unto" the eleven disciples, "saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

You perceive, Brethren, by the very terms of this commission, that it was limited in its nature, and in the privileges, which it conferred. Our Saviour did not address mankind, at large. Here is no authority conveyed to Jewish doctors; those who officiated in Jewish synagogues, to go about evangelizing the world, and baptizing their converts into his spiritual fold. It is not conveyed to the best of them, to Gamaliel, to Nicodemus, to Joseph of Arimathea, much less to the worst. It is not even conveyed to the seventy disciples, whom he had before elected, and sent abroad on errands of miraculous grace and virtue; but to the eleven and the eleven alone. Had others acted under it, it would have been a manifest usurpation of ungranted power, it would have been a violation of Christ's ordinance, and would have subjected the offender, perhaps, to the same punishment, which afterwards befel Ananias and Sapphira.

No separation of individuals to a specifick office and ministry could indeed be more solemn and imposing. It was performed by our Lord in person, after his resurrection from the dead, and even under these circumstances was not fully completed. They were still to remain at Jerusalem, and wait for the promise of the Father. They were still to elect another to take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell. They were still to be baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire, before they could venture to act as ambassadors for Christ. And does this look as if their rights and privileges might be assumed by others, at pleasure. Does this look, as if any person, upon his own mere motion, or guided by some fancied call from God, could presume to exercise gifts and graces, thus solemnly and authoritatively conferred. To me, it speaks a very different language. To me, it reserves all original and inherent power to Christ. It confers it, after a delegated manner only, upon the eleven, and confides to them the responsible office, of being his ministers to the uttermost parts of the earth, of preaching his gospel, and founding his Church, wherever there were eyes to see, and ears to hear, and souls to save.

To what has been already advanced, I have therefore to remind you, that in every correct definition of a Church, you must invariably associate with it, the idea of officers, deriving their authority from its great head, and by him empowered to discharge its ministry, and perpetuate its existence. In this particular, it corresponds with all societies of human invention. You never heard of one, without its appropriate officers. Its very existence depends upon them. The moment it is formed, they are chosen. Without some presiding power, every thing relating to it would be involved in inextricable anarchy and confusion. It would be thus, with all literary and humane societies. It would be thus, with all the governments upon the earth. Our own would cease to exist, if there were no longer any provision for the election and appointment of men to administer it, according to the constitution and the laws. You are even aware, that with us, they must be elected with certain qualifications, and after a prescribed form and manner, or the nation would regard them in the light of usurpers, and refuse obedience to their illegitimate authority. Nor was the Church of Christ deemed, by its divine founder, of less value and importance than the societies and governments of this world. He has rather given

to it, an authorized ministry. He has rather promised to be with it "always, even unto the end of the world."

And now comes the question of greatest moment to those, who would enlist under the banners of the true Apostolick Church, and the ministry, it has received of the Lord Jesus. A vast multitude of sects are known to claim it, but as we have already seen, that it is one, and that "there should be no schism in the body," in other words, no sects, where is it to be found? I answer, wherever the officers in question are duly called and ordained. Wherever, according to the institution of the Apostles, endued with power from on high, there are these three orders in the ministry; deacons, authorized to preach the gospel and baptize; priests or presbyters, having the additional authority to commemorate the death and sufferings of Christ, in the holy eucharist; and bishops, who alone possess the greater power of celebrating the holy rites of confirmation and ordination. And to convince you, that this is the doctrine of our protestant Episcopal Church, I shall here recite the twenty third article of her creed. "It is not lawful for any man to take upon him the office of publick preaching, or ministering the sacraments in the congregation, before he be lawfully called and sent to execute the same. And those we ought to judge lawfully called and sent, which be chosen and called to this work by men who have publick authority given unto them in the congregation, to call and send ministers into the Lord's Vineyard."

In the preface to her ordination services, she is still more explicit and declares, "It is evident unto all men, diligently reading holy Scripture and Ancient Authors, that from the Apostles' time there have been these Orders of Ministers in Christ's Church,—Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. Which Offices were evermore had in such reverend estimation, that no man might presume to execute any of them, except he were first called, tried, examined, and known to have such qualities as are requisite for the same; and also by publick Prayer, with imposition of hands, were approved and admitted thereunto by lawful Authority. And therefore, to the intent that these Orders may be continued, and reverently used and esteemed in this Church, no man shall be accounted or taken to be a lawful Bishop, Priest, or Deacon, in this Church, or suffered to execute any of the said Functions, except he be called, tried, exam-

ined, and admitted thereunto, according to the Form hereafter following, or hath had Episcopal Consecration or Ordination."

It is scarcely possible to conceive of language more plain and unequivocal than this. It conveys opinions entirely coincident with my own. An episcopalian upon principle, I do most sincerely and conscientiously believe them. Not however, because they have been drawn up by divines eminent for their piety, and renowned for their theological learning; but because they have their foundation in the scriptures of truth, and are susceptible of a defence, as solid and substantial as those scriptures themselves. You must bear with me, Brethren, while I pursue it; while I endeavour to convince you upon this subject, as I am myself convinced, by a species of evidence, that taken as a whole, amounts to the demonstration produced by figures, which cannot lie. If there be any failure, with minds open to rational conviction, it must result from the weakness of the advocate, and not from the absence of ample proof to be gained from the bible, and most triumphantly corroborated by the written testimony of the primitive Fathers of the Church.

A good logician often commences a train of reasoning with the least satisfactory argument, gradually proceeding to the more powerful and convincing, and determined as I am to be very full, as well as free, in this discussion, I shall adopt the same method, and maintain, in the first instance, the scriptural origin of the ministry of the Church, upon the ground of analogy.

You are probably aware of the almost universal opinion prevailing among Christians, concerning types and antitypes. Types in theological language are emblems, by which something future is prefigured, and antitypes constitute whatever, when it actually transpires, is thus prefigured. The former are found in the old testament, the latter in the new. Abel, for example, was a type of Christ, and is so accounted by the Apostle, who tells us that "the blood of sprinkling speaketh better things than that of Abel." The intended sacrifice by Abraham, of his only son Isaac, is another, and evidently shadows forth the future sacrifice of the only begotten Son of God, upon the accursed tree, in order to secure the redemption of the world, and the forgiveness of sins. St. Paul indeed assures us, in general terms, that "the law was a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things." And

is too, at the very time, that he is speaking of the priesthood of Christ, and the offering up of his body upon the Cross once for all.

It is consequently, very generally admitted, that all the Mosaic institutions were typical of the Christian, that we have rites and ceremonies in the Christian, which exactly correspond, with those ordained of God, to be used in the Jewish Church. Baptism affords a familiar and well known illustration. It comes in the place of circumcision, and as such is frequently referred to by the sacred writers, and by Christ himself, when reproving the blindness of Nicodemus, for not comprehending baptism, as the instituted mode of admission into his spiritual kingdom, he asks, "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" Is your memory so treacherous as to forget, that by circumcision you have been personally admitted a member of the Church of Israel?

The Lord's Supper is another. It answers to the feast of the passover among the Jews. It was even instituted by our Saviour, when he was commemorating that ancient rite, and is expressly recognised by St. Paul, as being established in its room. "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

With these remarkable coincidences existing, between the Churches of the old and new dispensations, we might therefore, Brethren, very naturally look for another resemblance in the order of men, who were set apart to administer the respective sacraments of the law and gospel. And we have it. In the Jewish Church, there were three orders in the ministry, the high priest, priest, and Levite. The first, having greater dignity and power, than the second, and the second, than the third. In the Christian Church, the same distinction in relation to number and authority has always obtained. It was thus during the actual ministry of Christ. He himself occupied the first rank, the twelve Apostles, the second, and the seventy disciples, the third.

And certainly, this argument founded upon analogy, upon the types and antitypes of the scriptures, derives peculiar force from the consideration, that our blessed Saviour is perpetually described, in the epistle to the Hebrews, by the very name, which was applied to the chief minister among the Jews. "Wherefore, holy Brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High

Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;" and again, "seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not a High Priest, which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Here also we are to bear in mind, that as among the Jews, so in this case the very name of High Priest implied superiority in station, that there must be inferior priests, and these, as you have seen, were not wanting to complete the analogy contended for. They existed in the persons of the Apostles and of the seventy disciples.

And now I ask; Was all this a matter of accident or of design? A matter of accident, that Paul called our Saviour, a High Priest, and that he himself selected two separate classes of inferior ministers, the one, for his constant, the other, for his occasional attendants? To me, it most clearly shows the actual accomplishment of Paul's declaration, that the law was a shadow of good things to come; a shadow, amongst other particulars, of the Church, the sacraments, and the priesthood of the gospel. For accident, I abjure the word as applicable to any thing performed under the auspices of Christ. For design, I embrace it on ground, which cannot be shaken, the accommodation of the new to the old dispensation, in every instance where purely spiritual things were prefigured. The sacraments of the Christian Church are not more essential to its existence, than is its priesthood. If a comparison must be formed, they are evidently of minor importance. For "how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent." If the former then were typified, why not the latter? Why this supposed distinction, between the sacramental means of grace, and the individuals authorized to administer them? The truth is, there is none. It never did and it never can exist. Unless you blend together the High Priest of our profession, the Apostles, and seventy disciples, unless you deny that there was any official difference of rank between them, I have satisfactorily proved, that our Saviour Christ had an eye to the three orders in the Jewish hierarchy, when at this early period he contemplated the future establishment of his own more glorious Church and ministry.

But at length he, who came to seek and to save that which was lost, was taken, and by wicked hands was crucified and slain. And being dead and buried, in three days, he was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." The period had therefore arrived for the final settlement of his visible Church. For the space of forty days previous to his ascension into heaven, he gave, according to the Acts, "commandments unto the Apostles whom he had chosen;" "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." The investigation of their nature and import I shall commence on the succeeding sabbath; and greatly shall I be mistaken, if they do not afford, when combined with the subsequent practice of the Apostles, in the propagation of the gospel; greatly shall I be mistaken, if they do not afford unanswerable proof of the sole solidity of an episcopal government and ministry in the Church of Christ.

I am however free to confess in relation to that branch of it, in which it has become my office to minister in holy things, that I love it most for the doctrines, which it maintains; the doctrines which are according to godliness. Here there has been no discrepancy upon fundamental principles from the beginning, and I trust and believe, that there will be none to the end. While many other denominations, growing out of the reformation in religion witnessed in the sixteenth century, have been inconstant and variable as the wind, a long and uninterrupted dissemination of evangelical truth has distinguished the annals of the Church. Like the laws of the Medes and Persians, her articles change not. Like the Author of that gospel, from which they are taken, they may be characterized as "the same yesterday, and to-day and for ever."

If you have been deeply smitten with any of the countless heresies, which have deformed the Christian world, you can find no encouragement to enter or continue within her pale. If you have been wrought up to some alarming pitch of religious phrensy, in which the feelings have been more inflamed, than the judgment enlightened; here there are no enthusiastick strains of devotion to keep alive the excitement, and no fanatick appeals calculated to bewilder, and then completely desolate the understanding. If you wish to cherish foul antipathies, to make your fellow Christians, the objects of scorn and odium, the butts of ridicule and derision; here is no

good to supply the evil passions of your nature, and no such bigotry, as to exclude from offices of love and brotherly kindness, a single individual of that human family, for which Christ our Saviour died. If you desire to confide in a barren faith, in an orthodox belief of doctrines, which are to have no salutary operation upon your lives, producing in you sobriety, righteousness, and godliness; here you can obtain no countenance; here your faith in Jesus must work by love, and spend itself in good deeds, or ye can have no part nor lot in this matter; we renounce the hollow hearted Christian, and would earnestly strive to be built up in true knowledge, faith, and holiness unto salvation.

But if there be a sorrowing penitent in this assembly; one who feels the intolerable weight of his sins, and would fain cast them off, as a sore burden, too heavy to be borne; one who sincerely believes in Jesus, and in the sole efficacy of his atonement; one who so understands his religion, as to be conscious, that he must adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things, fashioning his life after his example, and making it his invariable rule to be holy as he was holy, and pure as he was pure; here he may find in the ark of Christ's own Church, a refuge from the impending deluge of the divine displeasure; here he may become a Christian upon principles, that are sound and practical; here his devotion may be pure, his faith rational, his obedience perfect, and the final recompense of his reward ensured, without boasting, without thinking himself better than other men, without straining at the gnats, and swallowing the camels of vice and error.

Yes, Brethren, for these things it is, that I most love the Church, to which I belong. I love her for her moderate views, her chastened worship, her scriptural doctrines, and the catholic spirit of forbearance and good will towards others, which she would gladly inculcate upon the members of her communion. Wonder not therefore, that I am anxious to make you episcopalians upon principle, nor think it strange, that I should attach so much importance to an episcopal government and ministry, when I do most solemnly believe, that to this very reception of and continuance in the Apostolick faith and practice, we are mainly indebted under God for all those spiritual blessings and privileges, which have for so many ages been abundantly showered down upon our Zion: For all those fair proportions and unrivalled beauties, which the towering edifices

of her faith and holiness presents, and that must at some future period cause her to be universally hailed, as the joy of the whole Earth; her righteousness, according to the prophet's prediction, having previously gone forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth. AMEN.

SERMON III.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

I HAVE now arrived at that stage in the discussion upon Church government, when it will be necessary to be a little more explicit upon the true nature of the question, which has for about three centuries agitated the Christian world.

Let it be remembered then, that the terms, episcopalian and presbyterian, are properly and legitimately applied to the government or ministry of a Church, rather than to the particular doctrines or form of worship, which it embraces. An episcopalian is one, who believes in the divine institution of three orders in the Christian ministry, having an episcopos or bishop for the first and highest. A presbyterian denies this distinction of three orders, and contends that there is but one, the order of a presbuteros or presbyter, meaning the same with our English word elder. And I mention this circumstance, with the view of removing an erroneous impression existing in the minds of many, that the advocates of episcopacy are few in number, and on this account somewhat arrogant in their pretensions. When in reality, were you to divide the Christian world into twenty equal parts, eighteen, if not nineteen twentieths would be found ranged on our side of this important question.

The Roman Catholics wherever situated; the very extensive denomination called the Greek Church in Russia and Turkey in Europe, and in some parts of Asia, including the Holy Land itself; the Armenians also of Asia; the Abyssinians of Africa; the Swedish and many of the German Lutherans; such as belong to the established Churches in England and Ireland, with a respectable Church in Scotland; all these, Brethren, are as much Episcopalians as we are: they maintain as strongly the Apostolick institution of episcopacy, and reject as openly every other form of Church government, because in their opinion founded solely upon the basis of human authority. I might add to this catalogue, the large and zealous body of Christians scattered over our own country, and the land of our fathers, known by the name of Methodists, who are Episcopalians in principle; although for reasons which will hereafter be briefly submitted, we are constrained to consider them, unpossessed of the requisite authority, in other words, of what we claim to be a valid episcopal ministry.

Nor must I fail to remark, that the great body of seceders from the Church, have the same common right to a common feature in their ecclesiastical polity. Presbyterianism, so far as one order of ministers, and one only, is concerned, includes the baptist, the congregational, the unitarian, the universalist, and other Churches, as well as the highly respectable portion of believers, who have chosen to designate themselves by that particular title. They are all the advocates of ministerial parity or equality. We, on the contrary, of imparity or inequality. They assert, that there is but one order of ministers in Christ's Church, all having the same power and authority. We say, that there are three orders, and that these are so arranged, that the lower cannot perform the prescribed duties of the higher.

Bear therefore this statement in your memories. It is what civilians would term the very gist of the controversy. By it, I am willing to stand or fall in the appeal, which I shall make to the testimony of the scriptures. If episcopacy does not meet with full and decisive authority there, I am content to abandon it, or at least to retain it on the ground of expediency alone. For if God has instituted no peculiar system of ordaining and perpetuating the ministerial servants of Christ, it must be obvious to every reflecting mind, that we are left to our own choice and discretion, that we are in

fact authorized by him to found what Church or what Churches we please, and to appoint over them what minister or ministers, it seemeth to us good. To this liberty I could not urge one single objection. I would agree to it, most heartily and most conscientiously. Hath God said, and shall we not do it? This is the question. Hath God given to his Son but one Church for his bride, and shall we dare to present him with many? Shall we dare to tender him a kind of divine polygamy, and please ourselves with the idea, that he himself is as highly pleased and gratified with the offer? St. Paul, in his time, would have exclaimed, "God forbid!" and I love to be of the party of Paul; I love the Church that he loved, and in her defence would freely exhaust my feeble powers of argument and persuasion.

In my last discourse I closed with the strong probability, in favour of our three orders in the ministry, derived from the striking analogies subsisting between the Jewish and Christian Churches, and indeed showed that the high priest, priests, and Levites of the former were typical of the High Priest of our profession, the Apostles, and seventy disciples, whom he early gathered about his person. I also reminded you of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, and proposed to bring forward on the present occasion, the principal subject, which appeared to occupy his thoughts and conversation, during the forty days immediately preceding his glorious ascension into heaven. It was his Church. All Christians concur in this opinion, and are ready to admit, that at this time he did commission his Apostles to establish it upon the earth, wherever indeed they were directed to propagate the gospel of the kingdom.

The words of that commission I shall not now repeat, as there will be occasion to use them hereafter; but rather turn your attention to a position, that must command implicit belief from all, who truly reverence the character and authority of our Saviour, who acknowledge, that he was the Son of God and the messenger of his grace to the children of men. It is this. Whatever the Apostles did, in virtue of the commission of their Lord, to preach the gospel and baptize all nations, and after they were endued with power from on high, by the visible descent of the Holy Ghost upon them, in the shape of cloven tongues, as of fire; whatever they thus did, in relation to the Church and its ministry, is equally binding and

imperative upon us, as if it had been performed by our blessed Saviour in person. A contrary doctrine would destroy the inspiration, and consequently the authority of the four gospels, and of all the epistles, inasmuch as they were composed subsequently to his ascension. We should have nothing certain, nothing true; no baptism, no supper of the Lord, no ministry, no Church, no cross of Christ. in a word, no religion. But the Holy Ghost was given to them, that they might be guarded from all error; their divine Lord promised to be with them always, that their acts might be his, and command the reverence and submission of mankind on his, and not on their authority.

Hence when Peter, in company with John, had healed the lame man, and the multitude around greatly wondered, he addressed them in these words, "Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus;" "And his name, through faith in his name, hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know." Paul also in writing to the Corinthians, concerning the ministry received by himself and his brethren, expressly asserts, "that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." "Now then" he continues "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." And again, speaking of the holy eucharist, and the proper spirit and manner, in which it should be celebrated, "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you." By such strong and convincing language, we therefore easily perceive the interpretation given by the Apostles to the command of Christ, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations." They attempted nothing but through his power. They did nothing, but what he had expressly directed them to do.

Let us examine then the ministry they established, and see if it does not in all particulars correspond with our own, with the three orders of bishops, priests, and deacons, and not with the one order of presbyters or elders. I shall begin with the lowest, because its investigation will not require as much time, as the highest or episcopal rank. In the ordination service of deacons, the ordaining bishop

addresses the candidate in these words, "It appertaineth to the Office of a Deacon, in the Church where he shall be appointed to serve, to assist the Priest in Divine service, and specially when he ministereth the Holy Communion, and to help him in the distribution thereof; and to read holy Scriptures and Homilies," meaning sermons "in the Church; and to instruct the Youth in the Catechism; in the absence of the Priest to baptize Infants; and to preach, if he be admitted thereto by the Bishop. And furthermore, it is his Office, where provision is so made, to search for the sick, poor, and impotent people of the Parish, to intimate their estates, names, and places where they dwell, unto the Curate, that by his exhortation they may be relieved with the alms of the Parishioners, or others. Will you do this gladly and willingly?" To which the candidate answers, "I will so do by the help of God."

But where is the authority for all this; for ordaining a deacon, and specifying these duties, as appertaining to his office? I find it in various parts of the new testament, and particularly in the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, to whose minute recital, I must necessarily claim your indulgent attention. "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, Brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch; whom they set before the Apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them."

And now in justification of our Church; if it should be asked, Why do you ordain deacons? It appears, that the Apostles appointed men to this office and ministry, "and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them." If it should be asked, Why do you call them, deacons? They were diakonein, that is, to "serve" tables, and deacon, from the Greek word, diakonos, signifies a ser-

vant, while Paul, in his epistle to Timothy, gives him certain directions about "the office of a deacon." If it should be asked, Why should they attend to the sick, poor, and impotent people of the parish, where provision is made for their relief, as it is with us, by alms contributed at the holy communion, where deacons assist the priest, in distributing the bread and wine, thus serving at the highest of all tables, the table of the Lord? It is in conformity to the original cause of their appointment, the "murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration." If it should be asked, Why are they permitted to read sermons in the Church, and to instruct youth in the catechism, and to preach the gospel, if admitted thereto by the bishop, as is always done? It is because the first seven deacons were to be men, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, and because it is said, immediately after their ordination, that Stephen, one of their number, "full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people," so that "certain of the synagogue," "disputing with" him, "were not able to resist the wisdom and spirit by which he spake;" and afterwards, for the very reason, that he persisted in preaching, the people, whom they stirred up, stoned him to death, "calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." If it should be asked, Why are they allowed to baptize, as well as to preach? It will be found in the eighth chapter of the Acts, that Philip, another of the seven deacons, "went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them;" and "when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." If it should be asked, Was not the office temporary in its nature, and not designed to be perpetuated in the Church of Christ? I answer, that it was first established, because "the number of the disciples was multiplied," and that this reason for its existence is far more obvious at present, than it was at the period of its original institution. I also find that long after this, Paul addressed one of his epistles "to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." I find in another directed to Timothy, that he writes, "Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience." And to show, that they were to be admitted by him to this ministry,

Paul adds, "let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless."

And now, Brethren, it is my turn to ask, if I have not here presented you with a body of scriptural evidence upon this subject, which is utterly at variance with the modern idea of there being, but one order of Christ's ministers? If I have not shown you, beyond all reasonable doubt, that the office of a deacon, as exercised in our Church, is conformable in every particular to the model furnished by the Apostles, and by them intended to guide and control the practice of Christians to remotest time? It has been thus with episcopates in every age and nation, and you cannot but perceive, that they have ample authority from the source of all authority to justify their course.

What right then have men to build up Churches where this office is not recognised, or if recognised, only by name: a name, which you know is arbitrary in its nature, and that of itself signifies nothing? It is office, that confers right and power, the lawful, prescribed acts of those, who hold it, which serve to distinguish them from all other individuals. Tell me not then, that there are deacons in the Churches, to which I refer, as well as among episcopations. Those Churches do not allow them to be ministers of the gospel, for this would add a second order to their ministry, and prove an obvious surrender of their favourite doctrine, that there should be but one. Tell me not of such nominal deacons. They are not the deacons of the scriptures; they do not baptize, as did Philip: they do not preach the gospel, as did Philip and Stephen: they are not separated to this office and ministry by the imposition of hands, as were all those ordained by the Apostles.

And what right, I repeat, what authority is there, for this extraordinary innovation upon the original constitution of the Church? I reply that there is none. None, except that, which is to be traced to the caprice and invention of men. None, which would not equally justify us in abolishing the two sacraments of the gospel, as some denominations of Christians have already done. None, which would not fairly warrant the remark, if we had no personal knowledge of them, that some Christians appear to consider themselves wiser than the Apostles, better acquainted than they were with the mind of Christ, and therefore disposed to mould the Church and its ministry, in accordance with their happier views and sounder judgment.

I regret to be obliged to speak thus plainly and decisively; but the cause of truth and of Christ imperiously requires it. I am for rendering honour to whom honour is due. I know and am persuaded, that there is a large amount of piety and devotion to religion, clearly discernible among those, who reject what we esteem to be the ministry, instituted under the direction of our Saviour Christ. But still, none of these things move me to abandon it; none of these prevail with me to give in my adhesion to any body of believers, however respectable, who have renounced the holy office of a deacon, as it was instituted and maintained in the Apostolick and primitive age. He, who departs in one respect from such institutions, sets a dangerous example to others, to depart in many. So long as it is practised, there can be no reasonable hope of holding "the faith, in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace and in righteousness of life."

But to proceed. The second order of ministers in our Church is that, to which we apply indiscriminately the names of priest, presbyter, and elder. They are taken from the lowest order upon the principle advanced by St. Paul, "they that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree," in other words, are worthy of promotion. Their ordination is frequently mentioned in the scriptures. Paul and Barnabas, "when they had ordained them elders, presbuterous, in every Church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed." And many other passages of the same import might be easily adduced. But it is not necessary. The institution of this office by the Apostles is not denied. There is here no difference of opinion between us and our Brethren of other Churches. All admit its original existence. They however contending, that it is the only order of Christ's ministers. We, that it is the second, that it is subordinate to that of bishops, and without any valid authority to perform the rite of ordination.

So far therefore, Brethren, I have established by clear and unanswerable proof; first, the Apostolick office of a deacon, and second, by admission as well as proof, the equally Apostolick office of a presbyter or priest. I come therefore to the more interesting question, Was there another? In one point of view, there are none that can, or that do deny it. For the twelve Apostles were all living, at the time. that they ordained elders in every Church, and

laid their hands upon the seven deacons. And as their office is universally acknowledged to have been superiour to either of the others, it would appear, that during their existence at least, the analogy drawn from the Jewish priesthood is perfect and entire, wanting nothing. The Apostle was the antitype of the high priest, the elder, of the priest, and the deacon, of the Levite.

But the opponents of episcopacy assert, that the Apostolick office died with the twelve, and with Paul, called to be an Apostle, in a miraculous manner. We, on the contrary, most earnestly and zealously contend against this supposed termination of their office. We maintain, as all antiquity were accustomed to maintain, that it still exists in the person of every regularly ordained bishop, and although in such of your number, as may have bestowed little attention to the constitution of the Christian ministry, this opinion may excite no ordinary emotions of surprise; yet do I flatter myself, that ere the present discourses shall have been concluded, so powerful and convincing will be the weight of evidence in its favour, borne both by the scriptures and the writers of the primitive Church, that these emotions will change their object, and be directed to such, as have the confidence and temerity to deny its truth.

Before however I proceed in the investigation, it will be proper to place the subject in its true light. By maintaining the continued existence of the Apostolick office, you are not therefore to imagine, that we claim for those, who now enjoy it, the supernatural power of working miracles, or of speaking various languages. Such power belongs not to them, nor, as I am free to declare, to any other mortals, whatever they may believe, or profess to believe.

We rather make, and as I conceive very justly, a material distinction between the ordinary and the extraordinary gifts originally conferred upon the Apostles. The first or the ordinary are to be found in the commission granted them by their divine Lord. As it appears in the gospels, according to John and Mark, there is nothing that at this time demands our attention, or that is opposed to the more full and explicit terms, in which it is recorded in Matthew. "Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things

whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world." This then is the commission, which instituted their office, which constituted them the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. And read it, Brethren, as often as you please, it will be found to contain no allusion whatever to miraculous powers; to nothing, which is not at this very day, professedly enjoyed and exercised by the ministering servants of Christ. It does not even include the power of administering the Lord's supper by name. But only in general terms, it directs the eleven, to preach the gospel, to establish Churches, to admit members therein by baptism, and to perpetuate its existence by a ministry, as duly authorized to teach others, as they themselves were authorized.

But in relation to their extraordinary gifts, these were conferred upon them at a subsequent period, upon the memorable day of Pentecost, and made no part of the office, into which they were inducted. They could have taught all that Christ had commanded, they could have baptized and ordained, if these had never been granted. Not indeed with the same power and success: For at that early age, it was unquestionably of the utmost importance to possess the gift of tongues, in order to be able to address the nations in their respective languages; and the working of miracles, in order to convince them, that they were teachers sent from God. But when this was once accomplished, the powers themselves ceased with the necessity, which had called them into existence. They are to be considered, as so many admirable qualifications, which the Apostles enjoyed for evangelizing the world; but they were no more indissolubly attached to their office, than were the particular talents and statesmanlike qualities of either of our former Presidents, indissolubly attached to the station, they filled.

To convince you that I am right in this argument, and that it is only a popular error, which supposes the Apostleship to have been abolished, owing to the removal of supernatural powers; you are to remember, that those powers were exerted by many other individuals besides the twelve. Stephen and Philip were only deacons, and yet the former, "full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people." While of the latter, it is said, that "the people with one accord, gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that

were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed." Are you therefore prepared to renounce the office itself, because the modern deacon can lay no claim to the performance of such wonderful works? Let us see if the same principle would not carry you to a yet more revolting inference.

For private Christians also appear to have shared with the Apostles in these miraculous gifts. "And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul, having passed through the upper coasts, came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve." Are you therefore prepared to say, that there are no private Christians now, because there is not one single modern professor, who can pretend to have the supernatural gift of tongues? I anticipate your thoughts. You cannot but shrink from such a conclusion, with the utmost repugnance. You cannot but perceive, that the preceding examples clearly evince the imbecility of that argument, against the continued existence of the Apostolick office, which is founded on the present inability of those who exercise its ordinary functions to work miracles and speak with tongues.

I shall therefore, in my next discourse, proceed to prove that it never has been abolished, that it still continues to exist, and that we may fully rely upon the word of Christ, that it always will. In the meantime, let me assure you, that in the prosecution of this inquiry, I have no sinister designs to accomplish. If it were possible for me to entertain them, I can perceive no probability of their being realized. With the mere creature of popularity and expediency, it were apparently far better upon such a theme to impose the seal of perpetual silence upon his lips. But preferring to be guided by other and better motives, preferring the cause of truth, as the only cause, that can give me comfort in a dying hour,

and especially at the dreadful day of judgment, I have determined to venture all upon the resolute though charitable vindication of the true Church of Christ. "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."

If this course exposes me to cavil, I have learnt from Paul, that "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." If it fastens upon me the suspicion of corrupt and unworthy motives, I have obtained from the same source, this invaluable lesson, "with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; yea, I judge not my own self; For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord."

Upon principle, I am indeed extremely tenacious of freedom of thought and freedom of expression, and claiming it for myself, I am equally willing to have it enjoyed by others. Not however with the view of wantonly outraging the feelings of any Christian, nor for the purpose of derogating in the slightest degree from his attainments in grace, or his sincere devotion to the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom. For what could be gained by this conduct here, and even upon the supposition that there is much, what is to be gained hereafter? Nothing, absolutely nothing, unless it be the privilege of mourning, through a long eternity, the fearful recompense justly awarded to bitter revilings and ungodly malice. I am therefore steadfastly resolved, after the example and in obedience to the express mandate of Christ, to love all men, and particularly all Christians of whatsoever name and whatsoever sect.

It will be done, not by fighting their battles and espousing their errors, not by attributing to them the possession of that true Church, from which they have erred, not knowing the scriptures upon this point, however deeply they may be versed in their doctrines, and however freely they may have imbibed their spirit, in others; but I will show it, by cherishing towards them that kind of charity, which imputes good intentions, even where it is incapable of perceiving entire obedience to divine institutions. I will show it, by cordially inviting them, as I now do, as I always have done, and shall continue to do, to unite with us, at the table of the Lord, in partaking of "the cup of blessing which we bless," and "the bread which we break."

More than this, it is not reasonable for them to expect or to demand. More than this, I could not conscientiously advise an episcopalian of my own principles to tender. But to this extent, to the extent of loving them, even as Christ hath loved us, do you, Brethren, as you value the future approbation of heaven, do you always exhibit the true Christian temper and spirit of benevolence and forbearance. And may God, of his infinite mercy, soon cause all our divisions to be healed; by his Spirit, working in due season, may all believers, rallying round one common standard of faith and practice, soon become united in the one holy catholic or universal Church; and to Him, the Father, to the Son, and Holy Ghost, three persons and one God, shall be ascribed everlasting praises world without end. AMEN.

SERMON IV.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

IN my last discourse I succeeded, Brethren, in proving from the scriptures the divine institution of the office of a deacon. I showed you, both from the scriptures and by admission, the equally authorized office of a presbyter or elder, from which so large and respectable a body of protestants derive their name, and commenced my observations upon the highest or Apostolick office, by endeavouring to obviate the commonly received objection to its continued existence, which is founded upon the acknowledged absence of supernatural gifts, on the part of those, who now claim to exercise its powers.

The argument I cannot but think was full and satisfactory. It separated the office and its prescribed duties from the miraculous

properties, with which the twelve Apostles were endowed, in order to discharge their ministry to the greater glory of God, and the more certain propagation of the gospel. It clearly negatived the popular doctrine upon the subject, inasmuch as this would prove too much; it would prove, that if at this time there are no Apostles, because there are none to perform miracles and to speak with tongues; neither can there be deacons or private Christians, because they are now similarly incapacitated, although instances of the same powers having been once conferred upon them, are recorded in the scriptures.

I advance therefore in the discussion, and consider the language employed by our Saviour, at the separation of the eleven to the work of the ministry, as affording no slight evidence of the perpetuity of the Apostolick office. In St. John, the words are these, "Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." And here, Brethren, you are to bear in mind, that this passage must necessarily refer to those powers only, which can be borne by frail and sinful beings, like ourselves. It does not mean, for example, that because the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world, to taste of death for every man, and, by that death upon the cross, to make a full and complete atonement for all sin, it does not mean, that because of this, Christ sent the eleven to work out the redemption already worked, and endure the cross and death already endured. For such performances, finite beings would appear to have been utterly inadequate, and had it been otherwise, having been once accomplished, no possible necessity could exist for another sacrifice and expiation for human guilt.

We must consequently look for some other solution to this imposing delegation of power. Something within the scope of man's inferior capacity and character. Hence I confine it to those acts of the ministry, which the eleven exercised, as has been already shown you, in Christ's stead. It is as though he had said, As my Father hath sent me to preach the gospel and baptize, to build up the Church and establish its ministry, even so send I you, duly empowered in my name to discharge all these duties; as he sent me to make you Apostles, even so send I you, with full power and authority to confer the same dignity on others. If this is not a fair and correct paraphrase, I know not what is. I know not what else could have been possibly designed by our blessed Redeemer. What,

ever Catholics may assert, Protestants will never admit, that the oblation upon the cross can be again offered. Whatever favourite doctrine they may draw from the subsequent words of Christ, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." Protestants will never admit, that persons, who afterwards acknowledged themselves to be "men of like passions," with their hearers, had any other power to forgive sins, than that, which was declaratory and not absolute; that, which consisted in preaching repentance, as the medium of obtaining forgiveness of God, through Christ, and not auricular confessions, in order to receive it, in virtue of even Apostolick power. You must therefore perceive the strict propriety of the inference I have drawn. You must perceive, that, when in the very act of creating Apostles, our Lord used the emphatick language, "as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you," he certainly intended, that their Apostleship should be transmitted to others, with the like authority on their part to transmit it, *ad infinitum*.

And this, Brethren, is a conclusion, abundantly verified by the latter clause of their grand commission, as it is given in Matthew; "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." For we may say of all the original Apostles, as one of them early said of the patriarch David, they are "both dead and buried;" their spirits no more inhabit the bodies, that are now mouldered into dust and oblivion. Our Saviour could not therefore have promised to be with them, individually and personally, unto the end of the world; with the very men composed of spirit, soul, and body, whom he on this occasion addressed. It would have been falsified by the event. It would have derogated alike from his prescience and his truth. For the world yet exists, and in the world, those Apostles no longer live, and move, and have their being. But apply the promise, as it should be applied, to the office they sustained; consider this to have been prolonged from their age to our own; consider it to have been regularly filled in uninterrupted succession, throughout this long tract of time; and that it will thus continue to be occupied, until times shall be no more; and I find it easy to comprehend, as well as to believe. I find it peculiarly grateful and encouraging to reflect, that in the continued existence of its highest, Apostolick order, the presence of Christ is still enjoyed in the ministry of the Church.

that he still loves and fights for it, as his own glorious Church; that he still watches over it, with all a bridegroom's fond affection, and, through all future time, will make his own saying faithful and true, that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

But these arguments, it may be said, are mere inferences. The declarations in question do not, in so many words, announce the perpetuity of the Apostolick office. I reply, that if this objection be valid, it can be urged as strongly against every order of the priesthood, and thus leave the Church without a single authorized minister of Christ. I also appeal to the scriptures, and, to the close of that period of ecclesiastical history, which they embrace, can exhibit the names of other Apostles, than those originally appointed by our Saviour. Of Judas, one of the twelve, it is even "written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein; and, his bishoprick let another take." Hence the very first act, performed by the eleven, after the ascension of Jesus, was to supply the vacancy occasioned by the treason and death of Judas. In relation to two candidates selected for this purpose, "they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen, That he may take part of this ministry and Apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they gave forth their lots: and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven Apostles." He shared their title and their power. He was no more inferiour to them, than if he had been called and appointed by Christ in person. And was not Paul inducted into the same office? Was not he equal to his Brethren, who repeatedly styles himself, "an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God?" who expressly says, "I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest Apostles;" and again, "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool,) I am more?"

How evidently then do these two instances of Matthias and Paul negative the idea of the Apostolick office being limited, as to number, or person, or time. They were not of the twelve first selected by Christ. For a long period, after this blessed Being expired upon the cross, the latter was a persecutor of the Christians, and was only converted to the faith, he so nobly preached and adorned, by the miraculous power of God.

And should it be contended, that these were extraordinary cases, and not to be used as precedents in the future organization of the ministry, I have yet to present you with other names familiar to the readers of the sacred volume. In the fourteenth chapter of the Acts, divine worship was about to be offered to two of the evangelists, under the idea, expressed by the people, "in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men." "Which, when the Apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, and saying, Sirs, why do ye these things?" Barnabas therefore was an Apostle. In this case and some others, by that title, his name is associated with and even precedes that of the great Paul. But how is this to be reconciled with the favourite opinion of some, that the office itself was restricted, and incapable of being transmitted to others? How is that opinion to be reconciled with this passage, in the epistle of Paul to the Philippians, "I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger," that is, your Apostle, for in the original Greek, the word is "apostolon," although it is here translated according to its literal import, "one who is sent," "a messenger?"

Surely Brethren, these quotations, and many others of a similar character might be adduced; surely they are utterly at variance with the alleged confinement of the Apostleship to the twelve, to Matthias and Paul, or with its final extinction in them. Names, in themselves, are indeed extremely vague and uncertain; but in these cases, we find Epaphroditus denominated "my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow-soldier," as well as "your Apostle." We not only find the plural of this title applied to Barnabas and Paul conjunctively; but we discover throughout their travels, as recorded in the Acts, that they always exercised co-ordinate power and jurisdiction to the very moment, when "the contention," concerning the conduct of the evangelist Mark, "was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other." We discover, that at this separation, Barnabas took Mark, and Paul chose Silas, and that neither arrogated to himself the right or the power of regulating the conduct, or controlling the opinions of the other.

And here it will be necessary to remind you of one of the most material points, connected with this discussion. They, who claim that presbyters are now the only order of ministers in Christ's Church, are reduced to the necessity of maintaining, that those presbyters enjoy the authority of calling others to the same office, by the imposition of hands. We, on the contrary, firmly contend, that this authority was peculiar to the Apostles; that they alone exercised it in the scriptures, and finally transferred it, not to the presbyters, but to their immediate successors in the Apostleship. To prove this, we have both the negative testimony of the inspired volume, wherein not one single instance of presbyterian ordination can be found, and the positive, which shows, that all ordinations were performed by the Apostles in person; either by the twelve, by Paul, called to be an Apostle in an extraordinary manner, or by those, who were subsequently raised to this pre-eminent dignity. For example, the twelve "laid their hands" upon the seven deacons, who were never known to perform the like ceremony. The Apostles, Paul and Barnabas, "ordained them elders in every Church," who were equally scrupulous with the deacons in never presuming to assume the same power.

But what places this subject, beyond all reasonable doubt, is to be found in the epistles to Timothy and Titus, particularly in those directed to Timothy, who is therein regarded by the writer, Paul, as exerting Apostolick power and government, in the Church of Ephesus. I know indeed, that the Apostolick character of Timothy is denied by the opponents of episcopacy, and that they are extremely anxious to have it believed, that he was only a presbyter or, at most, an evangelist; although this last is a title, that designates no one office in particular; inasmuch as it signifies "a preacher," "the messenger of good news," and is consequently equally applicable to the Apostles, elders, and deacons, all of whom preached "glad tidings of good things." But to show you, that Timothy was superiour to a presbyter, and therefore an Apostle, with all the rights and privileges attached to that office, you are to remember, that it is presupposed by these remarkable expressions, "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands;" and again, "the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commend thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

All which evidently relates to ordination, and not to instruction in doctrine or practice; because these things were to be committed, not to the ignorant and vicious pagan of Ephesus, in the hope of producing his conversion; but to such as were already Christians, "to faithful men," who in virtue of this commission were to do that, which they had not power to do before, to preach the gospel and "teach others also."

With this explanation agrees that other admonition of Paul, "Lay hands suddenly on no man." Wherein you perceive, that the full power of ordination is granted to Timothy, and the greatest caution enjoined, lest there should be others, than the truly faithful, to obtain the ministry of holy things. But when or where, were such charges ever conveyed to the mere elders of the scriptures? Some of that order were at this identical period resident at Ephesus, and Paul on his journey to Jerusalem, long before the epistle was written, had sent from Miletus to Ephesus, and called the elders of the Church; and when they came, instead of charging them, as he charged Timothy, on the subject of ordination, he never referred to it; he addressed them altogether upon the subordinate duties of the ministry. And how are we to account for this, if elders were in reality entitled to ordain? How can we possibly account for this strange omission, on the part of Paul, in a particular, upon which he was afterwards, so very solicitous and so very minute? Especially, when he had sent for those elders from Miletus, for the express purpose of giving them his last advice, and had pressed it home upon their hearts with such power and affection, that "they all wept sore, and fell upon Paul's neck, and kissed him; sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more." You cannot believe that he had previously counselled them on the subject, when they were admitted to the eldership. It would involve the absurdity, if Timothy was only an elder like themselves, of sending him to Ephesus to ordain, where elders already existed, having equal authority, and equally explicit directions from Paul, as to the manner in which they were to discharge this important act of their ministry. I am therefore persuaded that they never had such counsel. I am persuaded on this ground; and for the additional reason, that elders never had such power conferred upon them. It is never attributed to them in the scriptures, in the Acts or in the epistles, and it was

never exercised. In the much controverted passage, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, WITH the laying on of the hands of the presbytery;" the preposition "with," at most, merely implies concurrence, and not the creative power asserted in the parallel passage, already quoted, "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee BY the putting on of my hands." Timothy, on the other hand, evidently possessed the right to ordain. It is ascribed to him in the solemn charge, "Lay hands suddenly on no man." It was this, that constituted his Apostolick character, and that gave him pre-eminence over the inferiour order of elders.

On no other principle can we satisfactorily account for another class of duties, as solemnly urged upon his attention. "Let the elders that rule well, be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine." "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear." For how can these charges comport with the opinion, that he was only an elder himself? How can this obvious superiority and right to govern, to put upon trial, and rebuke the elders of Ephesus, how can it consist with his holding the same office, and of course possessing no higher authority in the Church of Christ? Nothing could be more absurd: nothing more clearly evince, in those who maintain such ground, a palpable sacrifice of reason and argument on the altar of prejudice and schism.

For the present, I defer the no less striking example of Titus, to whom Paul writes, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee." I defer also the case of the seven Angels, presiding over the seven Churches of Asia Minor, who are addressed by St. John in the book of Revelations, and for whose Apostolick character there is abundant testimony. I defer them, because they will be better understood, when taken in connexion with the testimony of the primitive fathers of the Church, to which I have so frequently referred, and with which I propose to make you acquainted in my next discourse. It will fully corroborate the construction I have given to the scriptures, and establish it on their imperishable basis.

On the review of what has been already submitted, it appears to me, that nothing is hazarded, no liability to the imputation of reasoning from false statements, or of drawing false conclusions, when the whole current of scriptural evidence is asserted to bear strongly and incontrovertibly in favour of these three orders of Christ's ministers, deacons, presbyters or elders, and Apostles. In relation to the last and highest, I have shown you, what no one disputes, inasmuch as the Apostles appointed by Christ were the latest writers of the new testament, that this office continued in existence throughout the period included in the divine records. I have also shown you, that Barnabas and Epaphroditus were each honoured with the title of Apostles, and if it is not expressly appropriated to Timothy, that he yet exercised the highest and peculiar duties of the office itself, and must therefore upon every fair and equitable construction be enrolled on the catalogue of its incumbents.

No sensible man requires to be informed, that where inspired history terminates, we must necessarily resort to that which is uninspired, in order to prosecute the inquiry upon the subject of Church government. The principles upon which that inquiry should be conducted are very important and even essential. To be understood they should be explained with the utmost clearness and precision; but as my remaining limits would scarcely afford the opportunity to exhibit them in their true aspect, they must likewise be reserved to the succeeding sabbath. In the meantime, as the object is to prove the continuance of the Apostolick office, after the death of its original holders, and that to this office alone belongs the power of ordination, it will not be amiss to vindicate the course I am pursuing, with a few closing remarks.

And here Brethren, permit me to observe, that I rest every thing upon the basis of the scriptures, and repair to antiquity, for the sole purpose of proving, that I give them a fair and legitimate interpretation. If Christ had not said, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you;" if he had not promised to the Apostles in particular, "Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world;" if there had been no other Apostles, but the original twelve, with Matthias and Paul; I should not be so strenuous in maintaining, that their office exists at the very moment, I am speaking. Or, if there could be found one solitary example of presbyterian or

duration in the sacred volume; I should be well pleased to ascribe to it, the same force and authority, which now attaches to that which is episcopal. Under such circumstances, I would not hesitate to discard the unvarying testimony of antiquity, as either mistaken in its facts or spurious in its origin. But when upon every candid and impartial investigation of the word of inspiration, I am forced to consider the reverse of all this, as eminently true, nothing can satisfy my conscience; nothing, my internal sense of the divine right to institute and prescribe all things necessary for the welfare and prosperity of Zion; nothing, but a sacred regard for and an obedient following of holy oracles. As in them, the Church appears to me, to be constituted one and indivisible, with a ministry that is not to be changed in part or abolished entirely; I can never consent to coincide with human views, or to repose my confidence in Churches of human construction.

If this be bigotry, inasmuch as it is the bigotry of the scriptures, disclosed by our Saviour and his evangelists, it is mine, and I am perfectly willing to bear its reproach. "Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake." It is only refusing to others, the same right of private judgment, which they vehemently claim for themselves, and since we must all give an account of the things done in the body, where there will preside a judge, unbrassed by the denunciations of separatists, it is some consolation to be accused of bigotry, with the grateful consciousness pervading the soul, that it is for adhering closely to the pattern of heavenly things. But if we "sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for us?" If we knowingly reject his institutions, and in preference suffer ourselves to float upon the tide of popular prejudice; "who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?"

I allude not to the mere error of ignorance; where there is sincerity of heart to obey the will of God, whenever it is clearly perceived and understood. But for myself, having attentively studied and found out what I firmly believe to be the divinely instituted Church of Christ, I will not yield it up, though all men should forsake it, as all the disciples once forsook their Lord in his extremity and fled. I will not yield it up, because it would be highly criminal in me, however venial and pardonable in others, regarding it with

different eyes, and imbibing different impressions. For wherever there is wilful schism, there, there is sin. Wherever there is a known illegal assumption of the ministerial functions, or a known usurpation of the higher offices, by such as only enjoy the subordinate, there also, there is sin. And that these sins are not of the most venial complexion, in the sight of God, is readily admitted by the deeply skilled in sacred history.

Take for example, the case of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. They were the sons of Levi, a component part of the Jewish hierarchy, who, not contented with their inferiour station, aspired to the high priesthood itself. "And they," with two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, "gathered themselves together against Moses, and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?" But Moses replied, "Seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the God of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to himself, to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister unto them? And he hath brought thee near to him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee: and seek ye the priesthood also?" And what were the consequences attending this rebellion, this criminal ambition for sacerdotal pre-eminence? By the judgment of the Lord, "the ground clave asunder that was under them: And the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation." The case of Uzzah is still more remarkable, for it even embraces the inanimate things of the priesthood, and perhaps corresponds with every present unlawful consecration of the elements used in the Christian sacraments. Inconsiderately and without any evil design, he "put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God."

I am not therefore to be deluded with the modern cry, that bishops "take too much upon them," when claiming to be successors

of the Apostles in their office and ministry. It is the appointment of God, that they should do this, and who is there to darken his counsels or to contend with him? Not the preacher of to-day, who upon diligent examination of his word, perceives the angel of the Church at Ephesus to be commended in these words, "thou hast tried them which say they are Apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:" Who discovers in the short epistle of Jude, that the crime, just recited from the old dispensation, may be and was actually committed under the new. "These," he declares, "speak evil of things which they know not." "Wo unto them! for they have" "perished in the gainsaying of Core." Who finds St. Paul proclaiming to the holy Brethren among the Hebrews concerning the priesthood, "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also," he continues, "Christ glorified not himself to be made a High Priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee." For "though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered."

It is not then a light thing, as some persons are fain to imagine, to take upon themselves the office of an ambassador for Christ, uncertain or careless, whether they have or have not obtained it through the right channel, and from the requisite authority. It is rather a most solemn and serious transaction. One, that cannot be too intensely studied, or too ardently desired to be received according to the appointment of heaven. A slight research will almost invariably result in the opinion, that one denomination is as lawful as another, and one set of ministers, as duly authorized as another. But this is not the language of the bible, and when ye consider the multitude of evils springing from our numerous divisions, our endless heresies and schisms; can ye wonder that it is not? Can ye wonder, when that bible is thus strangely perverted, and every whim of man is but the precursor of new efforts to rend the body of Christ, that the evil days are not shortened, and that the dawn of millennial union and glory still refuses to appear?

Such wonder exists not with me. I look for no good thing that can come out of schism. I look for no millenium, until sectarians, after the future manner of the wolf and the lamb, the leopard and the kid, shall dwell and lie down together in the courts of the same house of our God: until, like the predicted nations, they shall bear

their partisan swords and spears into real spiritual ploughshares and pruning hooks, and learn the art of polemick war no more. And therefore, do I justify myself for embarking in these discourses, sustained as I am, by the hope of gaining some converts upon principle to the Church and ministry of the Lord's Anointed. And having embarked, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." Wherever there is a true Christian, let him erect what banner he pleases, I will bid him, with regard to his internal religion, his experimental faith and practice, "God speed." But nevertheless know ye Brethren assuredly, that union should be the watchword of all believers in Jesus, and at the same time, that so far as the general religious prosperity is concerned, all professed union is no better than schism, until there be but one visible Church, as there is but one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.

Hasten then, we beseech thee, gracious God, a union so fervently to be implored. Hasten the arrival of that day, when light shall come upon Jerusalem, and thy glory rise upon her; when the Gentiles shall come to her light and kings to the brightness of her rising; when her sons shall come from far, and her daughters be nursed at her side; when the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto her, and a multitude of precious offerings shall come up with acceptance on thine altar, and thou shalt glorify the house of thy glory. These things would we pray for, with one accord. These things, out of thine infinite mercy, do thou grant: and to thee, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three persons and one God, shall be ascribed all glory, and honour, and dominion, and praise, world without end. AMEN.

SERMON V.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

IN introducing the testimony of the fathers of the Church, in relation to the government and ministry established therein, by the holy Apostles, I have already represented, that the principles upon which the inquiry should be conducted are very important and even essential, and that to be understood, they should be explained with the utmost clearness and precision.

You are doubtless aware, that all the various denominations of protestant Christians are exceedingly tenacious in holding up the bible as the sole rule of their faith and practice; and not one of them has been more plain and explicit, on this very material point, than the Church to which we profess to belong. According to her sixth article, "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." With this doctrine I most cordially concur. I have not the remotest idea of recognising any religious system whatever, as a standard of authority, independent of that blessed volume, which alone contains the written revelation of God's will. To this alone I bow with reverential awe, and in the spirit of a rational and confiding faith.

And yet, who does not know, that from this one inspired source are drawn a vast variety of opposing creeds? It is the common standard of Catholick and Protestant, of Churchman and Dissenter, of Trinitarian and Anti-Trinitarian, of Calvinist and Arminian. All these, with many more entertaining opinions diametrically at variance, the one with the other; all these appeal to the same divine revelation, and thence deduce their respective rites and dogmas

Under such circumstances, to pretend that the several sects are alike just and right, in their different views and inferences, would be to deprive the scriptures of all harmony and all certainty. The same passage would be made in one mouth, to assert the everlasting, and in another, the limited punishment of the wicked. And certainly, by no process of reasoning, with which I am acquainted, can it be made to appear, that these discordant assertions are both true, and that a most palpable contradiction in terms is in fact no contradiction. The same may be said of all other debatable opinions. If both sides are to be considered equally entitled to credit, there is an end to the unchangeable character and consistency of God and his word. We are at perfect liberty to believe what we list, and to construct a thousand forms of doctrine, no matter how great may be the contrast, how irreconcilable the sentiments. But conscious as I am, that nothing of this kind can be justly imputed to the scriptures, it is with me a solemn and serious truth, that they speak but one language, and impose upon us the obligation of endeavouring to interpret them in singleness of heart and unity of mind.

Still however we differ; we cannot agree. Where then are we to look for a competent tribunal, to which we may refer our differences, and consent to abide by its decision? In this life I know of none, unless it be the uninspired writings of those, who first believed in Christ. Some of them were cotemporary and personally acquainted with the Apostles, and consequently in possession of much greater advantages, than we can possibly enjoy for ascertaining, if not the precise doctrines, at least the precise institutions of those immediate companions and servants of Christ.

Suppose, for example, that one of our age had constantly associated with the Apostles, and by the good providence of God had been permitted to remain to this time; suppose, that as a Christian of blameless life and conversation, he was every way worthy of our confidence in his veracity; would he not be able most satisfactorily to settle such questions, as these: Did the Apostles admit infants to baptism? Did they in celebrating the rite sprinkle or immerse? Did they recognise a change of the sabbath from the last to the first day of the week? Or to come more immediately within the design of these discourses: Did they establish the one single order of presbyters in the ministry, or the three distinct orders of

bishops, presbyters, and deacons? Most clearly there can be but one opinion upon such a statement. We should all be willing to admit the superiour accuracy of his knowledge to our own, and as readily agree to be governed by the decisive testimony he would be enabled to bear.

This then, as I conceive, is the very attitude occupied by the primitive fathers, with the single exception, that being dead they yet speak by the works, which they have left behind. They either lived with the Apostles, or in some instances soon after; they enjoyed all the facilities for information, connected with that early age and their peculiar situation; they were humble, pious, and holy men of God; they evinced their faithfulness unto death, in cheerfully submitting to the pains and penalties of martyrdom; they committed their knowledge of the Christian Church to paper; their writings have been preserved pure and unadulterated to our age, and are at this moment as credible and authentick, as they were at the moment, they were first composed.

And now I demand, in what light are they to be regarded? Not as divine authority, not as equally binding and imperative with the letter of the Scriptures; but as the declarations of so many impartial and disinterested witnesses of facts, which came under their own observation, and about which, they could be no more mistaken, than you can be of the nature of the government under which you live, that it is republican, and not monarchical; that its institutions are free, proceeding from the will of the people, and not arbitrary, from the nod of a despot. In determining the true sense of those passages of the scriptures, which relate to the ministry of Christ's Church, and concerning which, there is so much controversy existing at the present day, growing out of sectarian feeling and prejudice; where then can you discover another tribunal, in all respects, perfectly fair and impartial, as the tribunal furnished by the fathers? It may not, cannot be. I would far sooner disbelieve, that Alexander crossed the Hellespont, and Cæsar, the Rubicon, than deny all credibility to those numerous attestations, with which they prove episcopacy to have been universally established in the Church, by the Apostles of Christ.

I will here present you with a few of the most decided and unequivocal character. To begin with Ignatius, the successor of Peter in the Apostolick office at Antioch, appointed by him, and whose

personal knowledge of many of the Apostles is not denied. In his epistle to the Magnesians, he writes, "Seeing then I have been judged worthy to see you, by Damas your most excellent BISHOP; and by your very worthy PRESBYTERS, Bassus and Apollonius; and by my fellow servant Sotio the DEACON; in whom I rejoice, forasmuch as he is SUBJECT unto his bishop as to the grace of God, and to the presbytery as to the law of Jesus Christ; I determined to write unto you. Wherefore it will become you also not to use your bishop too familiarly upon the account of his youth; but to yield all reverence to him according to the power of God the Father; as also I perceive that your holy presbyters do; not considering his age, which indeed to appearance is young; but as becomes those who are prudent in God, submitting to him, or rather not to him, but to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ the bishop of us all. It will therefore behove you to obey your bishop; in honour of him whose pleasure it is that ye should do so, because he that does not do so, deceives not the bishop whom he sees, but affronts him that is invisible. For whatsoever of this kind is done, it reflects not upon man, but upon God, who knows the secrets of our hearts. It is therefore fitting, that we should not only be called Christians, but be so. As some call indeed their governour, bishop, but yet do all things without him. But I can never think that such as these have a good conscience, seeing they are not gathered together thoroughly according to God's commandment."

Here then Brethren, we have a distinct enumeration of the three separate orders of bishops, presbyters, and deacons; we have the subjection of the two last, and of all the Magnesian Christians, to the first, explicitly stated, and the dangerous consequences of insubordination maintained. Afterwards if possible, he yet more distinctly tells them, "I exhort you that ye study to do all things in a divine concord: your bishop presiding in the place of God, your presbyters in the place of the council of the Apostles; and your deacons most dear to me, being entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ."

In his epistle to the Trallians, he enjoins upon them, to "continue inseparable from Jesus Christ our God, and from your bishop, and from the commands of the Apostles. He that is within the altar is pure; but he that is without," "that does any thing without the bishop, and presbyters, and deacons, is not pure in his con-

science. And again, after enumerating the same three orders, he uses this strong and emphatic language, "Without these there is no Church."

In his epistle to the Philadelphians, he interprets the scriptures in a manner, scarcely compatible with the modern notions, to which I have frequently adverted; "I cried whilst I was among you; I spake with a loud voice; attend to the bishop, and to the presbytery, and to the deacons. Now some supposed that I spake this as foreseeing the division that should come among you. But he is my witness for whose sake I am in bonds that I knew nothing from any man. But the Spirit spake, saying on this wise; do nothing without the bishop: keep your bodies as the temples of God: love unity: flee divisions: be the followers of Christ, as he was of his Father. I therefore did as became me, as a man composed to unity. For where there is division and wrath, God dwelleth not. But the Lord forgives all that repent, if they return to the unity of God, and to the council of the bishop."

No language, Brethren, can be stronger than this, to prove, that its author, the companion of the Apostles, held in abhorrence what now constitutes the divisions and schisms of Christians; that he regarded them, as directly opposed to the witness of the Spirit of our God, and pregnant with incalculable evils to the Church; and that, in his judgment, all Christians must be subject to their bishop, as the highest earthly fountain of ecclesiastical authority, ordained of God. "Do nothing without the Bishop," "love unity: flee divisions:" "where there is division and wrath, God dwelleth not." On the other hand, in his epistle to Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, he takes occasion to address the laity of that Church, in these truly encouraging terms, "Hearken unto the bishop, that God also may hearken unto you. My soul be security for them that submit to their bishop, with their presbyters and deacons. And may my portion be with theirs in God."

Nor must I forget to apprize you, that these quotations are only specimens of a large number to the same import, pervading the epistles of this holy man, who professed to write, not of himself, not as taught by mere uninspired men, but upon the foundation of Christ and his Apostles. And what became of him? Did he continue faithful unto death? They who saw him die commence their narrative in these words; "When Trajan not long since came to

the Roman empire. Ignatius, the disciple of St. John the Apostle (and evangelist,) a man in all things like unto the Apostles, governed the Church of Antioch with all care." They describe his arraignment before Trajan, the intrepidity, with which he confessed Christ crucified, and record this sentence pronounced upon him, by that emperor: "Forasmuch as Ignatius has confessed that he carries about within himself, him, that was crucified, we command that he be carried bound by soldiers to the great Rome, there to be thrown to the beasts, for the entertainment of the people. When the holy martyr heard this sentence he cried out with joy, I thank thee, O Lord, that thou hast vouchsafed to honour me with a perfect love towards thee; and hast made me to be put into iron bonds with thy Apostle Paul." After which, they detail the incidents occurring in his journey to Rome, and proceed to relate, that upon the day of his martyrdom, "all the brethren kneeling down, he prayed to the Son of God in behalf of the Churches, that he would put a stop to the persecution, and continue the love of the Brethren towards each other; which being done, he was with all haste led into the amphitheatre, and speedily, according to the command of Cæsar before given, thrown in, the end of the spectacles being at hand." "Thus," they continue, "was he delivered to the cruel beasts, near the temple by wicked men;" and thus, by his patient submission to such a cruel death, do I claim for the testimony of the holy martyr, Ignatius, all credit in relation to the three orders in the ministry first established by divine authority.

Polycarp was another of the fathers personally known to the Apostles. He was indeed the fellow disciple of St. John with Ignatius; and Irenæus, who was his scholar, assures us that he was taught by the Apostles, and familiarly conversed with many, who had seen our Lord in the flesh. After being consecrated by his preceptor bishop of Smyrna, he also wrote several epistles to the Churches; but of these, one only remains, addressed to the Philippians, in which there is however express mention of the two orders of presbyters and deacons, and this abundant evidence in favour of episcopacy. Its direction, recognising what Ignatius incidentally notices in his epistle to the Magnesians, and all acknowledge to be true, that he was bishop of Smyrna; "Polycarp and the presbyters that are with him, to the Church of God which is at Philippi." Its approbation of the epistles of Ignatius, from which I have so largely

quoted. Towards the conclusion, he thus remarks, "The epistles of Ignatius which he wrote unto us, together with what others of his have come to our hands, we have sent to you according to your order; which are subjoined to this epistle: by which you may be greatly profited; for they treat of faith and patience, and of all things that pertain to edification in the Lord Jesus." So that this passage as evidently shows his perfect concurrence in all the statements, opinions, and declarations of Ignatius, who had previously visited him in his journey to Rome, as if they had been written with his own hand. And let me add, Brethren, that none of the fathers stand higher in the estimation of posterity than this worthy confessor. He was called by his contemporaries, "the blessed," "the most admirable Polycarp." He was beyond doubt, that angel of the Church of Smyrna, to whom the First and the Last directed St John to write, "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich.*)" "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.".

He was faithful! In the reign of Marcus Antoninus, he was brought before the Roman proconsul of Asia, and required to "Swear by the genius of Cæsar," and to "reproach Christ." "Eighty and six years" he replied, "have I now served Christ, and he has never done me the least wrong: how then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?" "The proconsul continued, and said unto him, I have wild beasts ready, to those I will cast thee except thou repent. He answered, call for them then; for we Christians are fixed in our minds not to change from good to evil: but for me it will be good to be changed from evil to good. The proconsul added; seeing thou despisest the wild beasts, I will cause thee to be devoured by fire, unless thou shalt repent. Polycarp answered, thou threatenest me with fire, which burns for an hour, and so is extinguished; but knowest not the fire of the future judgment, and of that eternal punishment, which is reserved for the ungodly. But why tarriest thou? Bring forth what thou wilt." And then was he condemned to the flames, his body was consumed; but his spirit returned to God, who gave it.

Yes, Brethren, such was the man, who bore evidence to the truth of episcopacy; who corroborated whatever Ignatius had written upon the subject, by annexing the epistles of his friend to the one, he himself addressed to the Philippians; and such is my confidence,

in their veracity, their holy boldness in the faith, that I would search for no brighter testimony to prove the accuracy of our views of the ministry established in the scriptures, than the confirmation afforded by the personal knowledge of these now sainted martyrs of the primitive Church. More indeed is at our disposal, but my limits will compel me to be very brief, in the extracts which follow. We have the testimony of Irenæus, bishop of Lyons in Gaul, and the scholar of Polycarp, who says in his third book, "We can reckon up to you those who were instituted bishops by the Apostles themselves—to whom they committed the Churches—left them their successors, delivering up to them their own proper place of mastership in them." And in his fourth, "True knowledge is the doctrine of the Apostles, according to the succession of the bishops, to whom they delivered the Church in every place, which doctrine hath reached us, preserved in its most full delivery." Wherein you cannot but observe, how fully Irenæus, who was also a martyr, confirms the doctrine, which I have before manifestly proved from the scriptures, that the Apostolick office was continued, and that it survived in the persons of the bishops, who, in his expressive language, obtained the mastership or rule of the Churches.

We have the testimony of Clemens Alexandrinus, a writer of the second century, who was himself only a presbyter of Alexandria, and therefore not to be charged with the inclination to elevate bishops over his own order. After commenting upon the duties imposed upon Christians generally in the sacred volume, he proceeds to remark, "There are other precepts without number, which concern men in particular capacities; some of which relate to presbyters—others which belong to bishops, and others respecting deacons."

We have the testimony of the celebrated Tertullian, also a presbyter, and flourishing at the end of the second, and commencement of the third century. His words are, "The chief or highest priest, who is the bishop, has the right of giving baptism, and after him, the presbyters and deacons, but not without the bishop's authority." Words, that as satisfactorily show the superiour office and power of a bishop, as any that could be selected from our vernacular tongue.

We have the testimony of Origen, a presbyter of the third century, who in explaining this part of our Lord's prayer, "Forgive us our debts," observes, "Besides these general debts, there is a debt due to widows who are maintained by the Church; another to deacons;

another to presbyters; and another to bishops; which is the greatest of all, and exacted by the Saviour of the whole Church, who will severely punish the non-payment of it."

We have the testimony of Cyprian, at this time bishop of Carthage, who thus speaks of the lowest order in the ministry, and of its subjection to his own; "The deacons ought no more to attempt any thing against bishops, by whom deacons are made, than deacons should do against God who makes bishops." He also reproves his presbyters for having, during his absence, readmitted to Church membership, some that had been before excluded by him, saying, "What a dreadful prospect we must have of the divine vengeance, when some of the presbyters, neither mindful of the gospel, nor of their own station; neither regarding the future judgment of God, nor the bishop that now presides over them, dare arrogate entirely to themselves, what was never attempted under any of my predecessors."

We have the testimony of Jerome, a presbyter of the fourth century, who contends for the analogy existing between the Jewish and Christian Churches, in these words, "What Aaron, his sons the priests, and the Levites were in the temple, the same are bishops, presbyters, and deacons in the Church." And again, "without the bishop's license neither presbyter nor deacon has a right to baptize."

Yes, Brethren, we have the testimony of these distinguished divines and primitive fathers, and they constitute a cloud of unexceptionable witnesses, all acknowledging the divine origin of our three orders in the ministry: all giving the first rank and dignity to bishops, the second to presbyters, and the third to deacons; all maintaining that bishops alone were the successors of the Apostles in their pre-eminent office and ministry. Let therefore the caviller be silent, let the enthusiastick seceder pause, as they review a body of evidence, so adverse to their pretensions, and that might easily be enlarged to the bulk of volumes. We have the voice of antiquity on our side. They can only oppose it with the dictum of the three last centuries, pronounced by a very small minority of the Christian world.

From what I have previously urged in relation to Timothy and Titus, particularly the first, you may however desire some additional evidence from the same source, that they were considered

Apostles or bishops, superiour to presbyters, and alone possessing the power of ordination at Ephesus and Crete. Among many others, Polycrates, a bishop of Ephesus near the close of the second century, says, that "Timothy was ordained bishop of Ephesus by the great Paul." Jerome employs nearly the same words, "Timothy was ordained bishop of the Ephesians by the blessed Paul." Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis in the fourth century, still more explicitly recognises his supremacy over mere presbyters, "The Apostle, speaking to Timothy, being then a BISHOP, advises him thus,—Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father." While Chrysostom of the same age, whose praise is in all the Churches, is even more precise and decided in one of his homilies saying, "Paul directs Timothy to fulfil his ministry, being then a bishop: for that he was a bishop appears from Paul's writing thus to him, Lay hands suddenly on no man." And then as to Titus, if any person is disposed to question his episcopal character and superiority over elders, let him peruse these few, out of numerous authorities. In his account of ecclesiastical writers, Jerome enumerates among others, "Titus, the bishop of Crete;" and in his comment upon this declaration of Paul, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:" nothing can be more to the purpose, than the construction he gives to it, "Let bishops who have the power of ordaining presbyters attend to this." Theodoret, bishop of Cyprus at the beginning of the fifth century, and esteemed one of the most learned fathers of the Church, also informs us, that "Titus, a famous disciple of St. Paul, was by him ordained bishop of Crete; being a place of great extent; with a commission also to ordain bishops under him." Take these authorities then, with the universal opinion and practice of the Church, wherein for the first fifteen centuries, there is no record of a single ordination performed by presbyters, which was considered valid; and but very few that were even attempted, the act being almost unanimously denounced as a usurpation of power, and the persons promoted being immediately degraded, as it happened to Ischiras ordained by the presbyter Colluthus, in the fourth century: Take these authorities, with this opinion and practice, and there can be no room for doubt, but that bishops, in virtue of their Apostolick rank, alone possessed the power of ordination. and that their sole right was never seriously ques-

tioned, until the age of Calvin, who in the sixteenth century established a new Church, in which for the first time presbyters successfully usurped the authority of their superiours. Under what pretence, and with what advantage to the unity and prosperity of the Church, I shall hereafter have occasion to examine.

One circumstance however I have as yet forborne to explain, to which I must particularly request your attention. It is a favourite argument with the opponents of episcopacy, and I believe the more a favourite from its being extremely plausible; and calculated to satisfy a superficial inquirer, that bishops have no more authority in the Church than presbyters or elders, because these titles are indiscriminately applied to the same office in the inspired volume. The fact we admit. We agree that, throughout the Acts and epistles, bishops and presbyters are frequently spoken of, as holding the same rank in the ministry. And what is our answer to this objection, always regarded by us, as alike insidious and unfair?

In the first place, that we attach no importance whatever to mere names; that it is the office and the duties appertaining to that office about which we are alone solicitous. At the very time then, when according to the scriptures, bishop and presbyter were convertible terms, and designated the same individual minister, there existed the lower order of deacons, and the higher order of Apostles; and it is for this threefold ministry, that we contend, and not for the names by which it was at any time distinguished. If it could be shown, that Apostles were not superiour to the then second order of bishops or presbyters, there would indeed be some foundation for the argument, but their superiority being universally acknowledged, it falls to the ground, being only calculated to gratify the subtle disputant on the one hand, and to secure the credulous proselyte on the other.

For, in the second place, while we accede to this interchangeable use of the words, bishop and presbyter in the scriptures, we fearlessly and confidently assert, that it ended with the Apostolick age, and was not afterwards employed by the primitive Christians. The celebrated Theodoret before mentioned, has furnished us with the following just solution of this merely apparent difficulty. "Epaphroditus was called the Apostle of the Philippians, because he was entrusted with the episcopal government, as being their bishop. For those now called bishops, were anciently called Apostles."

cles; but in process of time, the name of Apostle was left to those who were truly Apostles, and the name of bishop was restrained to those who were anciently called Apostles: Thus, Epaphroditus was the Apostle of the Philippians, Titus of the Cretans, and Timothy of the Asiatics."

A more triumphant vindication of episcopacy cannot be imagined. They, who succeeded to the Apostolick office, out of reverence to such of their predecessors, as were immediately called by Christ, appear to have relinquished to them the more dignified title of Apostle, and to have appropriated to themselves the humbler name of bishop, originally bestowed upon the second order of the ministry in common with that of presbyter; but thenceforward exclusively attached to the first, and never afterwards resumed by the second. The change was only in name, the two offices or orders remained as separate and distinct as they were before. Bishops were what the Apostles had been, and presbyters, ceasing to call themselves bishops, looked up to these, as their superiours, as they had formerly looked up to the Apostles, separated to that office, by their Lord and Master in person. It was precisely, as if by the common consent of the American people, springing from gratitude for the services, and veneration for the memory of Washington, it should be determined for the future, to appropriate to him alone, the title of President, and to all his successors in the presidential office created by the constitution, what is now regarded as the less dignified name of Governour. It would not abstract one iota from the constitutional privileges and powers attached to the office itself. Its incumbent would still superintend and govern, as he now superintends and governs; and he would be considered the merest trifler, who should have the folly to assert, that a change of names had produced a material change in official rank and authority. The title, Imperator, was conferred upon the victorious generals of Rome, during the period of the commonwealth. Was the Imperator, Augustus, no more than a general? Reply is needless. You know the distinction, you perceive its application; and thus I dismiss a most evasive subterfuge, as utterly unworthy of Christian candour and Christian truth.

On the whole, Brethren, although I may have fatigued you by a recourse to so many authentick records, I cannot but think, that you must concur with me in the opinion, that the clear, decided, and

unanimous testimony of all antiquity is to be found arrayed on the side of our venerable Church, and her truly Apostolick ministry. In adverting to the principles, with which the discourse was commenced, will you then abide by this testimony? Or, will you prefer to coincide in sentiment with our opponents, as far better qualified to expound the scriptures, and determine matters of fact than they, who were either brought up at the Apostles' feet, or were soon after eyewitnesses of the institutions, which universally prevailed, and that were universally considered to have had their origin from men, who spake and acted as they were moved by the Holy Ghost? I will not for a moment permit myself to doubt, but that your decision will be on the side, where scripture and antiquity are known to harmonize, where they combine to erect upon the towers and bulwarks of the Church, the ensigns of sacred truth, and of legitimate power and glory.

It is indeed strange to me, that well informed Christians should ever arrive at a different conclusion. It necessarily involves them in this plain and palpable contradiction. They readily receive the brief testimony of the fathers upon some subjects, and they reject it upon one, where they are far more voluminous and explicit. For does the baptist deny, that the scriptures allow of sprinkling or of infant baptism? After having exhausted to no convincing effect the various passages of the bible, which bear upon the controversy, they can confidently appeal to these very fathers, and claim the victory in virtue of evidence derived from them. Do persons contend, that there has been no change of the sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week or the Lord's day? They do not scruple to repair to the same witnesses, nor upon their authority do they hesitate to proclaim a similar triumph.

These however are comparatively minor points. There is one of vastly greater moment, and they who persist in discrediting the records of antiquity, in relation to the Christian ministry, put in the hands of the infidel the most powerful weapon, which he can possibly wield against the volume of inspiration. For when he contests its authenticity; when he asserts, that the present canon of scripture, including the gospels, the acts, the epistles, and the book of revelations, is spurious, and no more entitled to our confidence, than the many false gospels, acts, and epistles, which have also descended to our age; how will these persons be able to meet

am without recourse to the very men, whose testimony they renounce upon the subject of episcopacy, and whom the infidel may therefore argue are undeserving of the slightest credit upon any other?

See you not, Brethren, the dilemma in which they place themselves? Know ye not, that all the external evidence, in favour of the integrity of the present copies of the bible, rests upon the veracity of the fathers alone? Leave them entirely out of view, and there is no longer any certainty about it. The several parts of which it is composed were collected together, not by the Apostles, but by them. In the general councils convened by the primitive bishops, it was determined, what books purporting to be written by inspired men were authentick, what were spurious; and by that determination has the Christian world found itself compelled to abide. For once admit that their judgment was wrong in relation to one book, and it would cast a shade of suspicion over the residue. Once admit, that their peculiar situation gave them no greater advantage, than we have, to judge correctly, and the infidel may laugh in your face, when you tell him, that this gospel was written by Matthew, and that by John, this epistle by Peter, and that by Paul. We are consequently obliged to rely upon them, when we maintain the genuineness of all; upon their proximity to the Apostolick age, and the superiour degree of knowledge, which they derived from that single circumstance. And I ask no more, when I appeal to them and their writings in behalf of the Church founded by Christ and his Apostles. If they are good witnesses in the one case, they are good in the other; while the reverse is equally true, if they are to be disbelieved concerning episcopacy, they are to be disbelieved concerning the canon of scripture. I have no right to tell you, that one single leaf of the new testament is a genuine transcript of the original manuscript of its professed author.

You discover therefore, Brethren, the importance and the propriety of reposing implicit confidence in the testimony, which I have collected from the fathers; and may Almighty God in his wisdom enable you to bring the same to good effect; may it cause you to become more and more attached to the Church, which with his own right hand he hath planted in the vineyard of the world; may it preserve you effectually from being seduced from that communion with it, whose obligation is to be traced to its divine origin and authority;

may it induce you to adhere to it, to its Apostolick ministry, its pure and spiritual worship, its truly catholick and evangelical doctrines, upon the same principles of love and affection, which upon an occasion somewhat similar animated the righteous soul of Peter. "From that time," says the evangelist speaking of our Lord, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." Yes, Brethren, the Church in her ministry, her liturgy, her articles, her bible, and her great Head; the Church has the words of eternal life, and if ye desert her, where will ye find a better? For my own part, I could almost as soon be tempted to desert my Saviour and my God; and therefore, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." ADIEN

SERMON VI.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake
I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness,
and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

I CANNOT but flatter myself, that the last discourse delivered upon these words, presented the most clear and invincible testimony from the primitive fathers, of the divine origin of our episcopal ministry; a ministry comprehending the three distinct orders of bishops, presbyters, and deacons. Had it been necessary, I could have extracted volumes of evidence of a precisely similar purport. There is no credible author of that early age whose writings can be brought to bear against me. All speak the same language. All advert to the same organization of the Church of Christ, and seem

to be utterly unconscious of any seriously opposing pretensions. They feared indeed that they might arise. They knew that the feeling of insubordination was natural to the heart of man, and hence their repeated exhortations to unity, their hostility to schism, their commendation of inferiour ministers and laymen, for continuing in subjection to the chief ecclesiastick appointed and ordained of God to rule over their spiritual concerns. And yet our modern separatists would fain persuade us to a contrary belief; fain persuade us, that the Apostles committed the ministry of the Church to the one single order of presbyters, and that these alone possess a legitimate claim to the execution of its functions. But on the supposition that they are right, what might we not reasonably expect to find in those remnants of antiquity, to which I have referred you, as having survived the corroding lapse of time? A single dissenting presbyter of the present age, or a synod of presbyters, in addressing a kindred Church, would apply the like title to its ministers, and if there were associate Churches, all their pastors would be placed upon a par, and no one would be distinguished from the rest by an appellation, implying pre-eminence in ecclesiastical rank and station.

Under such circumstances and from such a source, an epistle to the presbyters of New-York, of Philadelphia, or Baltimore would be strictly correct; it would correspond with the acknowledged principles of the sect. But if an episcopalian should write, he would either address the bishop alone, or in conjunction with his presbyters and deacons. And how was it in primitive times? Do we in such cases hear of presbyters only? Is no higher office adverted to: no office vested in the person of one individual, and to whom they are supposed to yield obedience, as their superiour in dignity and power? Let Ignatius answer, Ignatius, the disciple of John; and Onesimus will be found to have been bishop of Ephesus, Damas of Magnesia, Polybius of Tralles, and Polycarp of Smyrna. Deacons were in each of those cities, they are named in his epistles, and the inferiority of their station is recognised. Presbyters also were there. Even the scriptures themselves speak of the elders of Ephesus. Whence then, if we are wrong, and our adversaries are right, whence this unaccountable language? Why is one individual singled out from all others, and dignified with the title of bishop? Why, if we peruse all early antiquity, do we hear of him only, and

not of two, three, four, or five bishops, residing at the same time in a city comprising multitudes of Christians, and adorned with numerous temples consecrated to the publick worship of God ?

Certainly Brethren, if the doctrine of sacerdotal equality be genuine, here is an enigma, that never was, and that never can be solved. But admit the Apostolick origin of episcopacy, and the clouds disperse, every difficulty vanishes, the fathers speak intelligibly, and are freed from the imputation of using the grossest misnomers. And let me tell you a better argument in our favour can scarcely be imagined. Many bishops in a single place at the same moment would have given no slight colour to the idea of their being of the like order with presbyters; but the undeviating evidence of there being no more than one establishes the permanency of the Apostolick office in that one, beyond all reasonable contradiction. Ignatius upon this subject is very definite, "Be not deceived, Brethren: if any one follows him that makes a schism in the Church, he shall not inherit the kingdom of God. If any one walks after any other opinion, he agrees not with the passion of Christ. Wherefore let it be your endeavour to partake all of the same holy eucharist. For there is but one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ; and one cup, in the unity of his blood; one altar; as also there is ONE bishop, together with his presbytery, and the deacons my fellow servants: that so whatsoever ye do, ye may do it according to the will of God."

Strong language this, and not the less worthy of remembrance because Ignatius here insists, that the elevation of a single individual to be the bishop of a city, having many presbyters and Churches is according to the will of God. And where was his authority for the assertion? He knew the scriptures, few persons have known them better, and from thence ascertained the location of Timothy at Ephesus, and Titus at Crete. He possessed the book of the Revelations of St. John, his preceptor, and there perceived this aged Apostle, under the direction of Christ, writing to the Angel of each of the seven Churches of Asia. And who was the Angel? You have only to read those short epistles, in order to be convinced, that it was the name applied to the ecclesiastick possessing supreme power and authority in the Church where he resided. Such is the testimony of all the fathers. Not a doubt existed in their minds of the identity of the two words, angel and bishop. Hilary among others

affirms it, "Angelos episcopus dicit, sicut docetur in Apocalypsi Johannis," and even the names of the individuals are given, who at that time held the bishopricks of Ephesus and Smyrna. It is indeed a remarkable fact, that the Angel of the former place is commended in the scriptures, for having exerted his authority in this manner, "Thou hast tried them which say they are Apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." But how could he do this, if he did not fill the Apostolick office himself? If the presbyters of Ephesus, mentioned in the Acts, were associated with him in the same ministerial order? Or why should he proceed to try and examine the pretensions of those impostors, if already persuaded, that the Apostolick office was limited to those originally appointed?

Surely Brethren, these are circumstances utterly at war with the imaginary blending of the three primitive orders into one. On such a principle, I can never reconcile the direction of the epistles to a single person, nor can I account for the sole jurisdiction he appears to have enjoyed, notwithstanding the presence of a numerous body of presbyters, holding as it is said the same rank and entitled to claim the same power. But upon our episcopal theory, there is no difficulty, no usurpation of undelegated authority. The two words translated Apostle and Angel are of the same signification. They respectively import, "one that is sent," "a messenger," and hence the propriety of Theodoret's expression, in accounting for the change of title, to which I directed your attention in my last discourse. "Those now called bishops, were anciently called Apostles; but in process of time, the name of Apostle was left to those who were TRULY Apostles, and the name of bishop was restrained to those who were anciently called Apostles." For when he speaks of their being truly Apostles, you are to consider, that the first of that order were literally "messengers," commissioned to "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." But their successors in office, being at length permanently settled in separate diocesses, in different towns and cities, the title "episcopus," from which bishop is derived, became more appropriate, inasmuch as it is a compound, answering exactly to our English word "overseer." And that this explanation is entitled to full belief, evidently appears from the fact, that even James, one of the twelve, was permanently stationed at Jerusalem, and is therefore perpetually called by the fathers, the

first bishop of Jerusalem. The same remark applies to Epaphroditus, to Timothy, to Titus, and to the seven angels, all in virtue of their succession called to be Apostles, and yet by all antiquity designated, as bishops of their respective cities, owing to their supreme oversight of the Churches therein established.

Another, and as I conceive, an invincible argument in support of the divine institution of episcopacy, is derived from what is universally admitted by its opponents. For when they tell us, that the government of the Churches was left by the Apostles to presbyters alone, they are forced to acknowledge its extremely limited duration. According to some, it was extinct before the death of St John. Others think, that about this time it began to disappear. Others, that by little and little, it gradually vanished during the second and third centuries; while no writer amongst them ventures to assert, that it continued in any part of the world, beyond the term of three hundred years.

Here then Brethren, permit me seriously to inquire: Is it credible that such a government as this could have been instituted by the Apostles; a government so fading and fleeting in its character; a government, so soon to be obliterated from the face of the earth, by the unanimous adoption of episcopacy? Verily, verily, I say unto you, it is far too marvellous for my belief, and I cannot but think for yours. Almighty God, in his infinite mercy, establishes one Church to-day; his adorable Son, after having purchased it with his precious blood, promises to be with it always, even unto the end of the world; and lo, to-morrow it is not! To-morrow, like Noah's dove, not a resting place can it find for the sole of its foot amongst all the nations, that had originally sought a refuge beneath the droppings of its sanctuary! If this is not impliedly disparaging the divine wisdom and foresight, I know not what is. If this is not calling in question the faith and obedience of the primitive Christians and martyrs, so often and so justly extolled, I know not what constitutes faith, nor what obedience. Before one, two, or at most, three centuries have elapsed, episcopacy a human invention completely triumphs over a ministry established under the guidance of heaven, and recommended by men endued with the inspiration of the Highest. If this be true, let us hear no more of the unchangeable character of God, or of the perpetuity of those institutions which he does not expressly abolish. Let us hear no more of the extra-

ordinary piety and holiness of our fathers in Christ. I can only wonder, that they had not discarded baptism and the supper of the Lord, as well as the ministry, by which they were to be celebrated.

No, no, Brethren, it will not, cannot do. Such a change and perversion of the true Church, such a successful usurpation over it, will never be seriously credited by persons, who can be persuaded to dismiss all bias and prejudice from their minds; who shall enter upon this investigation with a single eye to the discovery of truth; who shall determine to follow where it leads, and upon this principle alone make up their judgment for time and for eternity. Party spirit may make us any thing and every thing; may for a season blind the eyes, and warp the understandings of men; but almighty truth with irresistible force will eventually storm the ramparts of schism, and in the person of its divine Author, bring back the wandering to his fold again.

Particularly, when I have also to remark to you, that this alleged usurpation on the part of bishops was permitted to take place, without one noble effort to arrest its progress; one burst of indignation from the injured, lifting up their cry to heaven, and invoking the continuance of that liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. Let us bring the subject home to ourselves; let us imagine, that the existing protestant bishops were to endeavour, either by force, or combining their efforts, by collusion, to proselyte all the various denominations, and unite them in the one holy catholick or universal Church. Would not one voice be raised against it, not one outcry against persecution, or if persecution were renounced, against the subtlety and intrigue of mere propagandists? You know very well, that upon such an attempt, the protestant world would rise up in arms against them; they would vigorously repel every assault upon the respective citadels of their religion, and only yield up these beloved sanctuaries of their hearts, with their fortunes and their lives. If the sword were requisite, it would leap from innumerable scabbards; if the pen alone, myriads of writers would exhaust all their theological learning in the contest, they would compose a multitude of books, and these, with the arguments they contained, would descend to the latest posterity.

But be astonished, ye moderns, and wonder at the forbearance and even the pusillanimity of the ancients. If bishops were not the successors of the Apostles in office; if their powers were not

derived from them; then did they usurp their station, and lord it over God's heritage, as the expression is, without one exclamation of surprise, or one manly vindication of the Church and the ministry it had received by the appointment of the Lord Jesus. All opposition was hushed as the foot of night. Our most recondite opposers can discover no trace of it in ecclesiastical history. They are obliged to levy a tax upon conjecture, whenever they would settle the era of this wonderful revolution, and even then, they are unable to agree. Some will have it at one period, and some at another. Rolling centuries intervene and divide their judgment, when it might reasonably be thought, that such an event could no more be obliterated from the memory of man than the era of the crusades, or the epoch of the reformation.

Ancient authors indeed, and their works are abundant; authors of unblemished reputation and undoubted veracity. But if you search the writings of presbyters, who never attained the episcopal rank, even they are silent on the subject, and mute as the very graves into which they retired. They say nothing of prelatick ambition, nothing about the invasion of presbyterian rights. If you look over the folios of bishops, there are no arguments to justify their revival and personal assumption of the Apostolick office, none to silence the clamour of one intrepid champion of the ministry once delivered to the saints. On the contrary you will see, that all those writers of whatever rank and whatever country; all those writers unite in ascribing to episcopacy, the sanctity and the authority of a divine institution. They tell you, that the Apostles nominated bishops to be their successors in the several Churches planted by them. They confine to them the sole right of ordination, and most cheerfully did presbyters acquiesce in the speedy degradation of the few, who obtained an imaginary promotion, by the imposition of the hands of their inferiour order. And what is the fair inference to be gathered from this statement, this undeviating harmony in the records of those early times? To me, it speaks volumes in behalf of our construction of the scriptures. To me, it elevates episcopacy upon a lofty eminence, on which is inscribed in letters of living light, This is my will, and this is my ministry saith the Lord of Hosts. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches."

Waiving however, for the present, the testimony of the fathers; let us imagine it possible to resort to some other tribunal, with the view of determining our conflicting opinions. Let us imagine, that, preserved by some inscrutable providence of God, a Christian Church could be found in some sequestered corner of the globe, which from remotest time had enjoyed no intercourse whatever with their brethren professing the same faith. We know that the twelve were despatched on their errands of mercy into far distant lands, and of most of them, that no authentick memörials have been transmitted to us. Imagine then, that a Church of their planting could be found. Would not the character of the ministry it possessed be considered a safe guide, in enabling us to decide upon that, which was instituted by the Apostles, whose labours are known, although we contrive to interpret them differently? If, for example, presbyters alone were to be discovered in such a Church, would it not furnish our friends of that exclusive order with abundant cause of congratulation and triumph? If bishops, with presbyters and deacons in reverent subjection to them, would it not be equally the source of joy and exultation with us? Upon such a statement, it would be next to impossible to avoid either conclusion, or to object to the providential character of the discovery itself, provided it could be effected.

Be it remembered then, that it has. India was the place, and the celebrated navigator, Vasco de Gama, the discoverer, in the year fifteen hundred and three. "When the Portuguese arrived they were agreeably surprised to find upwards of a hundred Christian Churches on the coast of Malabar. But when they became acquainted with the purity and simplicity of their worship, they were offended. These Churches, said the Portuguese, belong to the Pope. Who is the Pope, said the natives, we never heard of him? The European priests were yet more alarmed, when they found that these Hindoo Christians maintained the order and discipline of a regular Church under episcopal jurisdiction: and that for thirteen hundred years past, they had enjoyed a succession of bishops appointed by the patriarch of Antioch. We, said they, are of the true faith, whatever you from the west may be; for we come from the place where the followers of Christ were first called Christians."

Their Churches were therefore Syrian, but were soon subjected to the inquisitorial power of Rome. "At a compulsory Synod, one

hundred and fifty of the Syrian clergy appeared; and, by the Romish Archbishop Menezes, "were accused of the following practices and opinions: That they had married wives; that they owned but two sacraments, baptism and the Lord's supper; that they neither invoked saints, nor worshipped images, nor believed in purgatory: and that they had no other orders or names of dignity in the Church, than BISHOP, PRIEST, and DEACON." At length, "the Churches upon the sea coast were compelled to acknowledge the supremacy of the Pope." But those, "in the interior would not yield to Rome. After a show of submission for a little while, they proclaimed eternal war against the inquisition; they hid their books, fled occasionally to the mountains, and sought the protection of the native princes, who had always been proud of their alliance."

These details I have extracted from the "Christian Researches in Asia" of the celebrated English missionary, Buchanan; who proceeds to inform us, that when "two centuries had elapsed without any particular information concerning the Syrian Christians in the interior," (those who would not submit to Rome,) and when "it was doubted by many whether they existed at all," he "conceived the design of visiting them." He did so, and found them in all their original simplicity and purity. He conversed with them freely; and do you wish to know by whom their Church was founded? According to their records, by the Apostle Thomas. After diligent inquiry, the good missionary says, "I am satisfied that we have as good authority for believing that the Apostle Thomas died in India, as that the Apostle Peter died at Rome." Do you wish to know what was at this time the character of its ministry? It was composed as it always had been, of bishops, presbyters, and deacons, the offices being as distinctly marked, as those of any episcopal communion whatever. Buchanan saw numbers of the two lower orders. On one occasion, he "was received at the door of the Church by three Kasheeshas, that is, presbyters or priests, who were habited in like manner, in white vestments." "There were also present two Shumshanas, or deacons." On another, he visited "Mar Dionysius, the metropolitan of the Syrian Church," and after a long interview, in which the conversation turned upon protestant episcopacy, he observes, "The bishop was desirous to know something of the other Churches which had separated from

home. I was ashamed to tell him how many they were. I mentioned that there was a Kasheesha or presbyter Church in our own kingdom, in which every Kasheesha was equal to another.—Are there no Shumshanas? (Deacons in holy orders.) None.—And what, is there nobody to overlook the Kasheeshas? Not one.—There must be something imperfect here, said he.”

And now, Brethren, advert to my introductory remarks, insisting upon the weight which would be justly due to such testimony as this, could it be obtained, I may with undissembled satisfaction exclaim, strange disclosure! Most gratifying coincidence between our own and the Apostolick Syrian Church! For other discoveries, the name of the pious and benevolent missionary, Buchanan, has resounded with applause far and wide; but for this, it has been suffered to glide into obscurity by the very men who had been foremost on the roll of his panegyrists. It did not comport with their previous partialities, and was not therefore allowed to diminish aught from their partisan zeal. The time had not arrived, when by a magnanimous effort, they could conquer all their prejudices, and seriously endeavour, by breaking down the partition walls which now separate the various denominations, to unite them all in the one mystical body of which Christ our Saviour is the great and glorious head. No, the time had not arrived, and I know not when it will. But this I know, that if this Syrian Church, so long secluded from the eyes of Christendom, had been presbyterian in its economy, we should have never heard the last of those notes of triumph, which would have been chanted throughout the dissenting Churches. The decidedly episcopal character it exhibits is what they cannot endure. It substantiates indeed all that we are in the habit of maintaining; it proves episcopacy to have been as old as Christianity; but then it lays the axe to the very root of schism, and the tall, unbrageous tree would still lift up its ambitious head, and interpose a dark shade between the nations and the light of revealed truth.

Among other objections to the termination of our sectarian controversies, which I have heard from our protestant brethren: it has been said, that in order to effect it, we must all return into the bosom of the mother, meaning thereby the Roman Catholick Church. But in my apprehension, the objection is founded in views altogether erroneous and indefensible. Can you not reform without annihilation?

lating? Can you not correct abuses without destroying the thing abused? If the bible were to be now printed with numerous corruptions of the received text, could not those corruptions be hereafter expunged, and the inspiration of that bible be still maintained? If our two houses of congress were to enact laws and enforce them, without even asking the approbation of the President, could not such proceedings be revised and corrected without forming a new constitution? Would it not rather appear, that this violated instrument could be redeemed in a legal manner from the hands of its innovators, and be restored in all its original purity and integrity?

Undoubtedly Brethren, and such was the nature and course of the reformation in England. It brought back the Church of Christ to its original state. Because the Roman Catholicks believed in the bible, the reformers of that age did not reject it. Nor on this account did they reject the two sacraments of baptism and the supper of the Lord, nor the necessity of repentance, of faith, and obedience, nor the cross of Christ, nor the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead and a judgment to come, followed by the respective issues of heaven and hell. But all these they retained, as having their foundation in holy oracles, and therefore worthy of all men to be received and had in reverence. And for a like reason, did they adhere to such parts of the external order and constitution of the Church and its ministry, which they discovered to be upheld by the express warrant of scripture, and the practice of all antiquity. They did not set up a new Church, with a new priesthood; but they reformed the old, they restored it to its primitive beauty and simplicity, they swept away the rubbish of ages, which had collected around its altars, and presented it anew to Christ, as "a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

There is indeed much of misconception prevailing upon this subject. It would seem to be supposed by many, that the claims of papacy were urged and successfully maintained at the first foundation of the Church in imperial Rome. But no such thing. It was long ages after, that the bishop of this city claimed supremacy over his brethren of the same order, and arrogated to himself the title of Christ's vicegerent upon earth. Nothing of the kind appears to have been contemplated by the early fathers. So late as the beginning of the fifth century, we have this pointed and conclusive testimony from Jerome, "Wheresoever a bishop is, whether at Rome or at

Eugabium, at Constantinople or at Rhegium, at Alexandria or at Tani, he has the same merit and the same priesthood, neither the power of riches, nor the humility of poverty makes a bishop higher or lower, but they are all successors of the Apostles." And this is the very doctrine upon which the English reformers proceeded. They retained the three original orders of bishops, priests, and deacons; and resolutely and truly maintained, that the Pope had no more authority over them, than they had over him. By Apostolick appointment his predecessors were bishops of Rome and of Rome only. All other jurisdiction was gradually, and as they proved, wrongfully obtained. Among those reformers were Cranmer, Latimer, and others, who were bishops in the Roman Church, and their change to the protestant faith did not vacate their episcopal rank. They were as good and lawful bishops afterwards, as they were before. The legality of their commission was as little affected by the displeasure of the pontiff, from whom they withdrew, as it could have been by that of the patriarch of Constantinople. Look at the language of Jerome, and you will readily discern, that he fully bears me out in the argument. The Apostles appointed bishops to preside over the Churches in various cities, towns, and districts of country; but they were all independent of each other, no matter who had the largest or who the richest diocess; independent, for the very reason, that they were all equally the "successors of the Apostles."

To this primitive form of episcopacy then, did the English reformers return, when they disclaimed all allegiance to the triple crown, and defied the thunders of the Vatican. The plea of being obliged to retrace our steps, and enter the Roman communion, in order to embrace the mother Church, is consequently in the mouth of a protestant altogether idle and fallacious. There is no such mother. If there were, Jerusalem is entitled to the honour, inasmuch as it was there, that the first Church was organized with the Apostle James to preside over its destinies.

To illustrate my meaning, as clearly as possible, I will suppose that the present pious and worthy bishop at Bardstown, his presbyters, deacons, and laity were to renounce their own, and embrace the protestant doctrines. They would then stand in precisely the same attitude, which was occupied at the reformation by the English episcopal Church. A branch of the true primitive and

Apostolick Church would be reformed; but a new one would not be created. There would be the same ministry and the same sacraments. The same good old bishop could continue to ordain and send forth ministers to feed the flock of Christ. In your estimation, in the estimation of all protestants, a papal bull could no more deprive him of his episcopal office, than could an anathema from the see of Canterbury or from that of Philadelphia.

With such views, views that are founded upon reason and scripture, I am entirely heedless of those ill advised jeers, which are designed to associate our own, with the Romish Church in the familiar relation of a mother and her daughter. Were it true; I have long since learnt, that real faith and holiness, undissembled love and benevolence can be cherished among Catholicks, in a manner, that would do no discredit to the best protestant in Christendom; and therefore, while I heartily abjure their doctrinal errors, I will still esteem the practical graces of many of their number, and love them for their work's sake.

In drawing to a conclusion, permit me, Brethren, to apologize for the continuance, if not for the length of these discourses. I could not embody all that I have to say within a shorter compass, without materially infringing upon the ulterior object in view. I wish them to be read, as well as heard. I wish, by meeting every supposed or rather every prominent objection, and by enforcing every prominent truth, to present the claims of our Church before a community but little acquainted with her origin, her doctrines, and her worship, and for this reason, as little inclined to appreciate her value.

You must therefore, for a few sabbaths more, continue your forbearance, and indulge me with a favourable audience. Hitherto, I have spoken plainly and decidedly; but I disdain to be influenced by the malice and the bitterness of an evil spirit. Inferences indeed may be very fairly and justly drawn altogether hostile to the belief and practice of many respectable bodies of Christians. But I do not like the baptist the less, because he freely and boldly maintains the invalidity of infant baptism, and the necessity of performing the rite in the case of adults by immersion. He is doubtless honest and faithful to his sentiments, and I like him the better for the freedom and the intrepidity with which they are avowed. How else, if he is right, and we are wrong, how else, can we be convinced of

our errour. For although my own opinion upon these subjects is believed to be fixed and stable as the everlasting hills, yet is it no such trifling affair to be in all things conformable to the institutions of the gospel, but that upon conviction I could gladly pass beneath the waters, and emblematically wash away my sins in the fullest laver of regeneration. Never then, will I bestow an opprobrious epithet upon those, who deem immersion in riper years essential to baptism, and on this account, with perfect consistency, refuse to all others the privileges connected with their communion.

And what I willingly accord to them, I as confidently demand for myself. In investigating the truths of scripture, it will never answer to be excessively anxious about the consequences. The preacher must not fail to persuade men by the terrors of the Lord, because the doctrine exposes a hearer to the pains and penalties of eternal death. Nor must he hesitate to proclaim and defend the true Apostolick Church of Christ, from the fear of inferentially invading the pretensions of others. But is he satisfied of her divine right and heavenly origin? For her, he must exert all the fervour of his heart, all the energies of his soul, all the strength of his intellect, until her righteousness go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth.

And this, by God's grace and protection, I will continue to do. I will neither start at a shadow, nor tremble at the sound of a voice. I will neither court the phantom, good report, without good desert, nor resist the counsels of revelation teaching me, that "if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." I would rather win an approving smile from him, in my honest endeavours to promote the cause of his Church and of rational religion, than to creep to my grave with a coward pace, not daring to venture a word against schism, heresy, and errour, nor to hazard an opinion to the prejudice of superstition, fanaticism and folly. The latter course would indeed be both shameful and treacherous; but the former will be sure to bring a man peace at the last, to impart strength and confidence to his departing spirit, and at length land him on those blissful shores, where there is rest, and glory, and beatitude treasured up for the true servants of God for ever and ever. AMEN.

SERMON VII.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake
I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness,
and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

HAVING already succeeded in proving, that the Roman Catholick is no more than a branch of the Apostolick Church; that the pope has no greater claim to preside over its concerns, than any other Christian bishop; and that consequently the English reformation, under the guidance of bishops, only restored things to their original purity and order: I proceed to notice an objection intimately connected with this part of my subject.

For when we assert, that by divine appointment, episcopal ordination is alone legitimate and valid, an indelible stigma is attempted to be fastened upon it, owing to the channel through which it has been derived. No matter indeed, if the bible has been transmitted through the same instrumentality; it is still pure and incorrupt. No matter, if the Almighty by means of the Roman Catholick has preserved to our use, the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper; they are not the less sacred and divine. No matter, if presbyterian ordination itself, by confession, can only be traced upward through priests of the same communion; not one solitary voice is therefore raised to denounce it, as unwarranted and unscriptural.

And yet, the moment we vindicate the sole right of a bishop to ordain and send forth the ministers of Christ's flock, that very moment all the prejudices existing against, and all the odium attached to the Roman Church are unhesitatingly brought to act upon us. Episcopacy becomes at once a relick of popery; it is violently assailed as one of the most prominent marks of the beast, and is attempted to be written down and invalidated under the pretence of this polluted connexion.

But while I am far from being disposed to justify what protestants concur in considering the unhappy errors of a Church, that can still boast of her Ganganelli, her Fenelon, and her Bridaine; it is well to remind you of a principle universally admitted in the science of civil government and of jurisprudence. For who is there to imagine, that the legal acts of a monarch, and even of our own president are susceptible of being annulled, through any stain, which may attach to their private characters? Does it destroy the efficacy of their signatures to the laws of the land? Does it cancel all their appointments to the offices within their patronage? Or the judge upon the bench; does it vitiate his decisions, and vacate the official stations he has the power to fill? You know Brethren, as well as I can tell you, that personal purity and reputation have nothing to do with the lawful exercise of established authority. It neither adds to, nor abstracts one particle from all vested rights.

The same principle prevails in religion. The minister of the gospel may be a concealed hypocrite, he may have a heart as black as hell itself, and still his merely instrumental acts have all the virtue and efficacy they could have, provided they had been celebrated by the purest hands and heart in the priesthood of Christ. Although his doctrines be false, and his life abominable in the eyes of God; upon its being ascertained by his fellow men, those, he married, are not remarried; those, he baptized, are not rebaptized; those, to whom he has administered the holy eucharist, are not therefore to believe, that it has not been worthily received. And precisely thus with ordination. I never knew a dissenting clergyman to be reordained, owing to the secret iniquity of his ordainers being afterwards revealed. I have never heard of an episcopalian divine, upon whom the ceremony was re-performed, because of the acknowledged delinquency of the bishop who first conferred upon him holy orders. And never, no never, but as a popular argument addressed to the ear, and not to the understanding, never can it be maintained, that the successive ordinations of a long line of Roman bishops have had the effect of vitiating the episcopal office, originated according to the will of heaven. It would subvert every thing sacred. It would subvert the bible, the sacraments, the ministry, and the Christian Church itself. I would indeed have all the ministers of Jesus to wash their hands in innocency, to be zealous and faithful in their holy calling; but if they will not, if they will pre

fer to be hypocrites with men and dissemblers with God; praised be his name, it defeats not his grace, it disturbs not his institutions, it works no corruption of blood, nor attains the rights and privileges of their successors to the end of time; those rights and privileges remain as good and valid, as if they had been ordained by the twelve Apostles themselves. The argument of the Church in her twenty sixth article is conclusive, and if necessary could be fully sustained, by an appeal to the private characters of numbers of the Jewish hierarchy. "Although in the visible Church the evil be ever mingled with the good, and sometimes the evil have chief authority in the ministrations of the word and sacraments: yet, forasmuch as they do not the same in their own name, but in Christ's, and do minister by his commission and authority, we may use their ministry, both in hearing the word of God, and in receiving the sacraments. Neither is the effect of Christ's ordinance taken away by their wickedness, nor the grace of God's gifts diminished from such, as by faith, and rightly, do receive the sacraments ministered unto them, which be effectual, because of Christ's institution and promise, although they be ministered by evil men. Nevertheless, it appertaineth to the discipline of the Church, that inquiry be made of evil ministers, and that they be accused by those that have knowledge of their offences: and finally being found guilty, by just judgment, be deposed."

There is also another objection to our episcopacy, which nothing but my desire to be very full and explicit in the present discussion could induce me to regard as deserving a reply. For inasmuch as the principle for which we contend, necessarily demands an uninterrupted succession of episcopal ordination from the Apostles' time to our own; this succession has been triumphantly affirmed to be a mere fable. It is said to have been lost in the revolution of ages, and to have no present existence, save in the vain imagination and usurped authority of presumptuous men.

But to this I answer, that those, whom we are accustomed to honour as the fathers of the Church, always preserved with the greatest care the catalogues of Bishops in the respective sees from the beginning, and that they have been in several instances continued down to our own age, as may be seen in the celebrated work of the historian Mosheim. And even admitting that our opponents are in this one particular partially right; admitting contrary

to the testimony of the most learned modern divines, that there are defects in those catalogues, that some names are omitted, and others erroneously inserted: All this would not disturb our claims in the slightest degree: For what is meant by an uninterrupted succession? Not the regular and consecutive induction of bishop after bishop in the same city, town or country. For had the continent of Asia been sunk in the ocean long centuries since, it would not have impaired the validity of the episcopal office in Europe or Africa; although Palestine in Asia was the country in which that office was first conferred.

Much less is it requisite, that the incumbent of any diocess should have been consecrated by his immediate predecessor. The vacancy itself is usually created by death, and then, would not the ordination of a bishop of Antioch, by the bishop of Jerusalem, of Smyrna, or of Ephesus, be equally legal and binding, as if it had been performed in his life time by the hands of the deceased ecclesiastick? Our friends devoted to the government by presbyters will not deny it. A presbyter of their Church, ordained in England, on his removal to this country, can succeed to the ministry of the ablest divine they have ever possessed. And so in the case of episcopacy; no matter where the ordaining bishop resides, all whom he ordains, whether bishops, presbyters, or deacons, retain their orders unto death, although they should repair to the uttermost parts of the earth.

The senior bishop of our country, for example, was raised to the episcopate in London, and his residence on this side of the Atlantick has not deprived him of his commission, nor are those upon whom he has conferred the same office, the less bishops than they would be, provided he could trace up a line of predecessors in Philadelphia to the Apostolick age. All therefore, that is essential to an uninterrupted succession, is embraced by the well known fact, that bishops have from time immemorial conveyed to others the same ministerial rank and authority, they themselves enjoyed, and which Christ and his Apostles introduced into the primitive Church. The circumstances of time, place, and residence are altogether immaterial. The actual succession has never been lost or impaired, because ever since the first institution of the Christian ministry, bishops have always existed, and always exercised what they considered the exclusive right to ordain and send forth their successors and other labourers into the vineyard of Christ.

I have already, Brethren, adverted to the first successful innovation upon this divinely established ministry in holy things. It was in the beginning of the sixteenth century, after fifteen hundred years of the Christian dispensation had rolled away, and the circumstances attending it are entitled to a brief review. The reformation commenced by Zuinglius and Luther had extended to Geneva, a beautiful town of Switzerland, and shortly afterwards the residence of the celebrated Calvin. This great man embraced with eagerness the reformed doctrines, and propagated them with all the zeal, inspired by the conviction of their truth, and all the success, usually following in the train of piety, learning, and talent. Confining himself at first, to what were really the corruptions of papacy, he did not immediately introduce the presbyterian form of government. He had himself been a presbyter of the Church of Rome, and although he necessarily retained the same office, notwithstanding his change of sentiment upon many subjects, it did not enter into his mind, that he was, in virtue of this inferiour rank, authorized to confer it upon others, by the imposition of his own hands.

Humanly speaking, it was an unfortunate circumstance, that at this important period, there was not in Germany or Switzerland, in France or Italy, a single Roman Catholick bishop, who renounced his opinions and joined the ranks of the reformers. Had it been otherwise, through his instrumentality, the reformation might have proceeded in the most unexceptionable manner. It might, and I am free to declare that it would. Calvin was not then in favour of a government by presbyters. He advocated no such change. He knew that episcopacy was of divine origin. He was so far from denouncing it as a corruption, that he would gladly have received and acted upon it, in the final settlement of the Church at Geneva.

I am free to declare all this, because he has left it upon record. These are his words, "If they would give us such a hierarchy, in which the bishops have such a pre-eminence, as that they do not refuse to be subject to Christ, and to depend upon him, as their only head, and refer all to him; then I will confess, that they are worthy of all anathemas, if any such shall be found, who will not reverence it, and submit themselves to it with the utmost obedience." Can any language be more forcible or determinate? He is most anxious for bishops of the reformed religion,—“If they will give us such a hierarchy.” He declares of those, who would dare to oppose

their pre-eminence in the Church,—“They are worthy of all anathemas.”

For my own part, Brethren, strong episcopalian as I am, let me assure you, that I could not feel myself justified in using this last expression; I could not find it in my heart to apply it to our present dissenting brethren, although Calvin, contemplating the very circumstances, in which they are now placed, did not hesitate to adopt it. And that this was the result of his sober conviction, uninfluenced by passion or prejudice, appears from the following testimony of Dr. Abbot, archbishop of Canterbury, and a warm advocate of the great reformer's peculiar doctrinal views; “Perusing some papers of our predecessor Matthew Parker, we find that John Calvin, and others of the protestant Churches of Germany and elsewhere, would have had episcopacy, if permitted. And whereas John Calvin had sent a letter in King Edward the sixth's reign, to have conferred with the clergy of England about some things to this effect, two (popish) bishops, viz: Gardiner and Bonner, intercepted the same; whereby Mr. Calvin's offerture perished. And he received an answer, as if it had been from the reformed divines of those times; wherein they checked him, and slighted his proposals. From which time John Calvin and the Church of England were at variance in several points; which otherwise, through God's mercy, had been qualified, if those papers of his proposals had been discovered unto the Queen's majesty during John Calvin's life. But being not discovered until, or about the sixth year of her majesty's reign, her majesty much lamented they were not found sooner. which she expressed before her council at the same time, in the presence of her great friends, Sir Henry Sidney, and Sir William Cecil.”

So true it is therefore, from these authorities, which might be easily enlarged, both from his own works and those of his followers; so true it is, that this eminent divine was fully persuaded of the Apostolick claims of episcopacy, and that he earnestly desired to reform the Church under its auspices. But bishops were not to be obtained, and perceiving the importance of a settled ministry, he reluctantly availed himself of presbyterian ordination, and for a long time justified his departure from the old path on the ground of necessity alone.

And what was the opinion of Luther, even more renowned than Calvin? Speaking of the Romish bishops, and of the duty of obeying them, in the event of their acceding to the principles of the reformation, he says, "We would acknowledge them as our fathers, and willingly obey their authority, which we find supported by the word of God."

What was the opinion of Melancthon, universally admired among the reformers for the excellency of his life, and the extent of his erudition? In his apology for the celebrated Augsburg confession, among many similar passages, this is particularly striking, "I would to God it lay in me to restore the government of bishops. For I see what manner of Church we shall have, the ecclesiastical polity being dissolved. I do see that hereafter will grow up a greater TYRANNY in the Church than there ever was before." And never, Brethren, was the prophecy of uninspired man more exactly fulfilled. No wonder that its author elsewhere demands, "By what right or law may we dissolve the ecclesiastical polity, if the bishops will grant to us that which in reason they ought to grant? And if it were lawful for us to do so, yet surely it is not expedient. Luther was ever of this opinion." Melancthon indeed employs yet more forcible expressions in a letter addressed to Luther in the year fifteen hundred and thirty. "Zuingli" he tells him, "has sent hither, in print, his confession of faith. You would say neither more nor less, than that he is not in his senses. At one stroke he would abolish all ceremonies, and he would have no bishops."

What was the opinion of Beza, the learned friend of Calvin, his colleague and successor at Geneva? "In my writings touching Church government, I ever impugned the Romish hierarchy, but never intended to touch or impugn the ecclesiastical polity of the Church of England." "If there are any who reject the whole order of episcopacy, God forbid that any man of a sound mind should assent to the madness of such men."

What was the opinion of Martin Bucer, another highly distinguished reformer? "By the perpetual observation of all Churches even from the Apostles' times, we see, that IT SEEMED GOOD TO THE HOLY GHOST, that among presbyters, to whom the procuration of Churches was chiefly committed, there should be one that should have the care or charge of divers Churches, and the WHOLE ministry committed to him; and by reason of that charge, he was ABOVE

he rest, and therefore, the name of bishop was attributed peculiarly to those chief rulers."

Finally, what was the opinion expressed in the articles drawn up by the protestant delegates to the diet at Worms, held in fifteen hundred and twenty one, by command of the Emperor Charles the fifth, and at which Luther himself was present, confuting all his popish adversaries? "Our learned men have expressly yielded ordination to bishops, if there may be a reformation."

Is it possible, Brethren, to require more favourable testimony than this, in behalf of episcopacy, from the very men, who were the founders of a presbyterian ministry, and who only sought to vindicate its adoption upon the plea of necessity? It is sufficient for me, I ask for no greater concessions from those, who still adhere to the schism, so deeply and so justly regretted by its authors. I will do honour to the candour and integrity of those early reformers; although I am by no means satisfied with the propriety of their course; in other words, I cannot recognize the doctrine of necessity.

I will explain myself, by supposing that a body of Christians without a minister were to be cast upon some desert coast or uninhabited island, and deprived of all intercourse with their brethren of the same faith. In order to enjoy the sacraments of the gospel, would they be justified in selecting one of their number to administer them, when the Apostle expressly says, "No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made a high priest?" I know of no case where the necessity could be greater. But recollect, that in the course of divine providence, they were placed in this peculiar exigency, and why should they not humbly submit to that providence, and by no act of their own interfere with the previous counsels of his word? I can perceive no good reason for another course, and am convinced, that upon refraining from it, the disabilities under which they providentially laboured, would never be arrayed against them; would constitute no cause for their final exclusion from the kingdom of heaven. But, as "in every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him;" so in the case of these exiled Christians, would the Supreme Governour of the universe be more pleased with a reverent submission to his ordering of the destinies of men, than with the arbitrary assumption on their part of the ministerial office.

This train of reasoning is even more applicable to the first reformers. They should have reposed more confidence in God, and less in human expedients. They should have permitted their supposed necessity to have been tried by the test of time, and doubtless he, who overrules all things for the best, would have relieved them from their embarrassment, without their having recourse to that fatal schism, which has terminated in so many heretical doctrines and sects.

But even admitting, that the plea of necessity was good at the dawn of the reformation, it cannot be maintained at the present day, when a government by protestant bishops is accessible to all: when the seceders from primitive order can return into the bosom of the Apostolick Church, and thus compose the divisions and heart-burnings, so injurious to the extended triumphs of the cross. We have no Cardinal Richelieu with us to deny the episcopal office to any sect, as he once did to the petitioning protestants of France, telling them, "If you had that order, you would look too like a Church." But protestant episcopacy is now firmly established, and the reformed Churches, wherever situated, can easily avail themselves of its divine sanctions. That they do not, is their own fault, as much as it is the fault of the Quakers, that they have no ministry and no sacraments.

And here I am compelled by a sense of duty to speak of a separation from the original Church of a somewhat different character, although the difference is evidently nominal, rather than real. We have amongst us a denomination, respectable for their numbers, and distinguished for the warm fervour of their religion, who, while they reject in terms the ministry of presbyters, do but conform in terms to that of bishops. I need not name them. They trace up their history to the year seventeen hundred and twenty nine, and had their origin in the partial secession of a pious and talented presbyter of the Church of England, from the pale of her communion. I revere the memory of that good man, although I cannot but think him to have been egregiously mistaken in the course, he deemed it advisable to pursue. In many respects, he was truly a burning and a shining light. Upon most doctrinal and practical subjects, he preached wisely and well. What his precise views were upon the Christian ministry, it is now difficult to ascertain. At one time, he would seem to have discarded episcopacy, and at another

to have retained it. Even in one letter, he says, "That bishops and presbyters are the same order, and consequently have the same right to ordain;" and yet he was "determined, as little as possible to violate the established order of the national Church to which" he "belonged;" and then he speaks of the English bishops as having "a legal jurisdiction," which appears to imply the right of the civil government to mould the Christian Church and its ministry, agreeably to its convictions of the prevailing necessity or expediency.

But whatever may have been his actual meaning, or whatever opinions he may afterwards have embraced, it is certain, that he deprecated an entire separation from the Church of his fathers, that he died in her communion, that he never ordained a permanent body of bishops, presbyters, and deacons for the spiritual benefit of his English followers, and that they have religiously adhered to his principles and practice.

In relation to his disciples in North America, he however thought himself justified in appointing two gentlemen, "joint superintendents" over them. To one of these, he gave, preceded by a suitable preamble, this testimony under his hand and seal. "I have this day set apart as a superintendent, by the imposition of my hands and prayers, (being assisted by other ordained ministers,) Thomas Coke, doctor of civil law, a presbyter of the Church of England, and a man whom I judge to be well qualified for that great work. And I do hereby recommend him to all whom it may concern, as a fit person to preside over the flock of Christ." But if by this imposition of hands any thing more was intended, than the blessing of a good old man upon his fellow labourer in the ministry, or if the word superintendent was designed to be used as synonymous with bishop; then are we called upon to believe in the strange anomaly, that one presbyter, as Mr. Wesley styles himself in the instrument, can advance another to a higher order in the priesthood than he himself possessed; then is the established order of things completely reversed, and inferiours in office are rendered capable of creating and commissioning superiours.

But the truth is, no such power was claimed and no such promotion was intended. Soon after the ceremony had been performed, Dr. Coke left England, and arriving in America forthwith laid his hands upon Mr. Asbury, who was to be united with him in the proposed superintendence. For some time, they contented themselves

with their original title; but at length, sensible perhaps of its ambiguous character, they concluded upon a change, and announced themselves to the publick, in an address to the father of his country, as "bishops of the methodist episcopal Church."

With what propriety, let the benevolent founder of the sect, himself attest. In a letter to Mr. Asbury, he thus expostulates with him and his colleague, "In one point, my dear brother, I am a little afraid both the Doctor and you differ from me. I study to be little, you study to be great; I creep, you strut along. I found a school, you a college. Nay, and call it after your own names! O beware! Do not seek to be something! Let me be nothing, and Christ be all in all. One instance of this your greatness, has given me great concern. How can you, how dare you suffer yourself to be called a bishop? I shudder, I start at the very thought. Men may call me a knave, or a fool, a rascal, a scoundrel, and I am content; but they shall never, by my consent, call me a bishop! For my sake, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, put a full end to this! Let the presbyterians do what they please, but let the methodists know their calling better."

And now, Brethren, after the recital of language, alike perspicuous and emphatick, I ask you, if it can be seriously believed, that its reverend author ever imagined himself authorized, or that he ever designed, to consecrate any man to the episcopal office and dignity? It is impossible. Or, if it be possible, it is at least equally rational to believe that black is white, and white black. There is indeed a mystery hanging over this business which a divine of the same Church has recently attempted to unfold. But my limits, as well as my inclinations, forbid me to be more explicit.

It is however necessary to advert to one other circumstance of an extraordinary character. Dr. Coke came to this country as superintendent in seventeen hundred and eighty four; but, after having exercised the power of ordination, for about six years, he appears to have become extremely dissatisfied with himself, and to have been fully convinced of the invalidity of his supposed episcopacy. In this state of mind, he wrote to Bishop White of our Church, proposing a reunion of their respective Churches, and expressing this opinion of the ministers already ordained by Mr. Asbury and himself; "I do not think, that the generality of them, perhaps none of them would refuse to submit to a REORDINATION."

in a subsequent interview with that distinguished and now venerable prelate, "there was also suggested by him a propriety, but not a condition made, of admitting to the episcopacy, himself and the gentleman associated with him in the superintendence of the methodist societies." The projected union was not however effected, but to show you, that he was still aware of the defect in his assumed official rank, about eight years afterwards, he made a written application to the bishop of London to ordain a given number of travelling preachers in England, for the purpose of administering the sacraments to the people of their connexion.

All these documents I have in my possession, in a printed form, and what do they prove? Most clearly and incontrovertibly, that the Church, of which I am speaking, has no such episcopacy as is considered by us, or was considered by its founder and first superintendent, to be authorized and genuine. Of the former, in addition to his own letter, disclaiming in such nervous language the title of a bishop; Dr. Coke remarks, "He did indeed solemnly invest me, AS FAR AS HE HAD A RIGHT TO DO, with episcopal authority;" but mark the consequences, "he went farther, I am sure, than he would have gone if he had foreseen some events which followed. And this I am certain of, that he is now sorry for the separation." Of the writer's own sentiments, enough has been already submitted to convince you, that he placed no confidence whatever in his personal pretensions to the office he had exercised. Never did a lawful bishop apply for the reordination of those, upon whom he had imposed hands; never could a lawful bishop ask to be consecrated anew. Yet this was the course he felt himself constrained to adopt, and such is the confessedly imperfect fountain of authority, from which is derived the ministry of the methodist Church. Presbyterian ordination, it undoubtedly has; but episcopal, it has not.

And believe me, Brethren, I regret the circumstance. It is no gratification to me, that its episcopacy is manifestly spurious; nor do I take any pleasure in stating these things, except as matters of fact, open to the inspection of all, and the legitimate subjects of fair, dispassionate inquiry. In this, we are tolerated by the laws of the land, and God forbid, that it should be otherwise; God forbid, that we should not speak the truth upon a concern so grave and solemn, either from an apprehension of the consequences, or because the truth may give offence. I have learnt a very different

lesson of our Saviour Christ, when speaking "to those Jews which believed on him," he said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed: And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

I have learnt indeed that "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God," "by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him," never hesitated on all suitable occasions to discourse freely and unreservedly upon all the errors, whether of faith or practice, by which his hearers were liable to be seduced, and I breathe no wish for higher authority to exculpate me for presenting the fullest information upon the subject, I have undertaken to discuss. Abuse is one thing, but argument is another. Mis-statements are to be severely reprehended, but important facts are worthy of all acceptance. To pretend, that they are sometimes of such a nature, that they cannot be conveyed in the spirit of meekness and humility, of charity and brotherly kindness, is altogether idle and extravagant. Can you not reprove the vices of the sinner, without hating his person? Can you not denounce an heretical doctrine, without inveighing against the heresiarch, who maintains it? Then are there no real graces of Christianity to soften the heart, to animate the soul, and give utterance to the lips, which should keep knowledge.

For myself, I will yield to none, in the tolerant feelings I delight to indulge. Towards the wise and good of all denominations, my bosom expands with the liveliest fraternal affection and sympathy. I rejoice in the well founded belief, that they are Christians, such Christians as adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour upon earth, and as will hereafter enjoy his blissful presence in heaven. If it were not so, my religion would be a poor, vain, imaginary thing, the scorn of angels, the sport of demons, the precursor of eternal woe. Whereas I can with truth give the right hand of fellowship to all the saints of the Most High God, let their scriptural views upon some points be ever so variant, and their ministry and worship ever so adverse to my conceptions of the primitive Church, and the beauty of its holiness. I can pray for them, and breathe with them the same prayer to heaven. I can sit down with them before the same table of the Lord, and call him to remembrance with thankfulness, as the blessed Author of our common salvation. I can this day, with the utmost cordiality, minister to them the emblem-

at the flesh and blood of our redemption. Through life I can make allowance for their imperfections, as I wish them to make allowance for mine. I can give honour, where honour; and praise, where praise is due. And when my last hour is come, I am sure, that it will prove no diminution of my happiness, to be conscious, that I can only hope to enter the mansions of glory, in company with myriads on myriads of my fellow Christians of a different persuasion, over whom will be pronounced the approving sentence, "Well done ye good and faithful servants—enter ye into the joy of your Lord."

Nevertheless, I must, while here below, clothed with the garments of mortality; I must contend, most earnestly contend for the faith of Christ. It matters not to me, to what it relates, whether to internal graces or to external order. It is all holy, it is all divine, and it is all imperative. You have no right to say of one gospel truth, that it is immaterial; or of one gospel institution, that it is either indifferent or superfluous; that it may be acceded to or resisted at pleasure.

Hence I can never reconcile it to my conscience to be so tender of the mere opinions of men, as to lay my hand upon my mouth, and my mouth in the dust, rather than controvert a favourite prejudice, or expose myself to an injurious reproach. But while I live, I will endeavour, through good report and through evil report, to serve the Lord with fear, and of him only will I be afraid. While I live, although it will be impossible to renounce, or even to modify the truths this day delivered, I will not be inflamed by the fires of a persecuting spirit; I will not suffer this fiend of hell to rankle in my heart; I will not cease to remember, that "now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity." And still, in defence of the true Church, the true Zion and Jerusalem, so often and so unjustly assailed, will I neither hold my peace nor rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. AMEN

SERMON VIII.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake
I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness,
and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

WITH the preceding discourses has terminated all, that I am at present disposed to urge in behalf of the divine right of an episcopal government and ministry. When a few more subjects, intimately connected with the prosperity of our Zion, shall have passed in review before us; it will be proper to enforce the general argument, and urge the entire claims of the Church, in some closing remarks, designed to inculcate the advantages of unity, and to expose the evils of schism.

So far, I have borne a decided, though I trust and believe, an unexceptionable testimony against the great body of non-episcopalians, wherever located and into whatever sects divided. My present object will be limited to those, who entertain a widely different opinion from us and all other Christians, upon the much controverted subject of baptism.

Not however, that I propose to enter largely upon its discussion. It would occupy too much time. It would interfere with the more prominent design of this investigation, and be liable to divert the attention of the hearer from what I cannot but consider a far more interesting and important inquiry. It is, nevertheless, very obvious, that one, among many causes of the separation of our fellow Christians from the Church universal, is to be traced to the mode in which we administer the sacrament of baptism, and also to the principle involved by its celebration in the case of infants. Can this cause in either particular be fairly and justly obviated?

As to the mode: In the absence of every thing approaching to a positive, verbal command, our judgment must necessarily be guided by such inferences as may be reasonably drawn from the inspired

volume. Its examples are always made to vary in their character, precisely as one disputant contends for sprinkling, and another for immersion. They have not, for a length of time, and in all probability for long ages hence, they will not control the universal suffrage in favour of one common interpretation.

I shall therefore pass them by. I will not accompany our blessed Saviour to the stream of Jordan: For whether the rite were there performed by sprinkling, by affusion, or by immersion; like the circumcision, which he previously endured, it would scarcely form an unalterable precedent for us, inasmuch as it was not Christian baptism; inasmuch as certain disciples at Ephesus, who had before submitted unto John's baptism, were at the instance of Paul rebaptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. I will not undertake critically to expound the scriptures, which speak of the man of Æthiopia, of Lydia, or of the jailer at Philippi, nor will I venture to display a profusion of learning on the original Greek and Hebrew words, whether they actually mean to sprinkle, to pour upon, or to immerse. These things have been argued pro and con a hundred and a thousand times, and still the question remains debatable and debated, as it was, when first broached by our modern anabaptists.

I rather prefer to inquire: Is the mode in any sense material? If it had been divinely prescribed, or, which is equivalent, if it had been unquestionably the uniform practice of the Apostles to baptize in a particular manner, I would never answer in the negative. But under existing circumstances, when conjecture must necessarily supply the place of an undoubted record: Is the mode in any sense material? Is the inward and spiritual grace betokened by external baptism, in the slightest degree affected by the quantity of water used in its celebration?

Let us examine the matter analogically. There is but one other sacrament appointed in the scriptures of the new testament, and can you tell me the size of the loaf broken by our adorable Saviour at its institution? Can you give me the exact weight of the several fragments of that loaf distributed by him to his disciples? No, you can do no such thing. You cannot even tell me the particular species of corn of which it was composed. Nor of the wine; you cannot resolve me, what kind was employed, or what amount was received. Bread and wine were indeed consumed, but all these

minute details are suppressed. They appear to have been considered beneath the dignity of so solemn and sacred a transaction. In the eyes of our Saviour Christ, quality and quantity possessed no inherent value. His thoughts preferred to rest upon the memorable event, mere physical substances were proposed to symbolize; upon his precious death and sacrifice on the cross for our redemption. No matter therefore, what may be the kind or what the measure of the bread and wine, of which we partake in the eucharist; there is as much virtue in them, provided they are received in the spirit of faith accompanied by thanksgiving, provided they do truly represent unto us the body and blood of our redemption; there is as much virtue in them, as if they were the precise counterpart of the materials originally blessed and bestowed by Christ.

And thus, if there be any safety, any propriety in reasoning from a strongly marked and unequivocal analogy, thus it is with holy baptism. There is no express command, as in the case of Naaman the Syrian leper, and the waters of our country are as good as the waters of Jordan. We may be, either immersed in or sprinkled by them, and if the sacrament be rightly received, our polluted heart and flesh will become clean; we shall resume the heart and the flesh of a little child. To deny it, would be an excess of that very formality, of which the Church is so often and pertinaciously, though so wrongfully accused. It would cause the shadow to outvie the substance; the figure of the seal, the wax upon which it is impressed; and consequently our friends of the baptist denomination very properly maintain their opinion on the ground of Apostolick usage and divine authority alone. And certainly, if that ground were tenable, for one, I would yield to it the homage of a willing mind. I would renounce all my present sentiments, in its favour, lesthaply I should be found to fight even against God.

But permit me, Brethren, to remind you of a remarkable passage of the scriptures, which powerfully strengthens my convictions of their error. I allude to that wonderful act of condescension on the part of our gracious Lord, when "he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded." The menial character of the office smote the heart of Peter, and warmly remonstrating against it, he declared, "Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered

him, if I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean." You discover therefore, Brethren, the emblematick nature of these words, and their spiritual application. Literally we know, they cannot be true. We know that the mere washing of the feet cannot cleanse the whole surface of the body. But still as an emblem of internal purity, it was pronounced, by the highest authority, to be equally significant with a more copious ablution. The hands and the head of Peter were not washed, and yet he was "clean every whit."

And what is external baptism, but an emblem, the outward and visible sign and seal of an inward and spiritual grace?" You must be sensible, that it amounts to nothing more, and that I have here presented you with a perfect analogy. You have only to substitute Christian for Jew, with the antitype for the type, and Paul himself will tell you, "He is not a Christian which is one outwardly; neither is that baptism which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Christian which is one inwardly; and baptism is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." Yes, Brethren, in the spirit and not in the letter. Outward circumcision itself was partial, while the whole heart was sanctified and cleansed. Outward baptism may be performed by the sprinkling or the pouring of water upon the face, and still this partial "washing of regeneration" may be as effectually accompanied by "the renewing of the Holy Ghost," as if the whole body were momentarily buried by immersion. That such was the opinion of the primitive Christians is obvious from their constant practice in all cases of emergency, particularly in that of clinicks or those who by sickness were confined to their beds.

Recollect also that the Apostles invariably baptized their hearers immediately after their conversion, and that consequently upon every profession of a true and lively faith, we are solemnly bound to imitate their example, and by no means delay the applicant for the mystical washing away of sin. But the preacher of the Gospel has converted a caravan amid the burning deserts of Africa, or a polar tribe with whom for nearly half the year, the rivers are congealed to ice. Can any man then forbid a cup of water, that these should not be baptized? Must the rite be delayed, until those de-

serts are passed, and until a summer's sun shall have unlocked the frozen regions of the north? Surely it would not comport with its speedy celebration by the Apostles of Christ. The baptist missionary would be obliged to sprinkle, or he would set more value upon the quantity of water, than he would upon that loss of time, for which he has no authority in the sacred volume.

Nor is this the worst feature attending his principles and practice. For it might be contended, that as these cases will rarely occur, so, of the alternatives presented to his choice, it would be better to refuse sprinkling and incur the danger of delay. I will then present him with an unbaptized individual, and there are many such, upon his dying bed. To immerse him is beyond the moral power of man. And if he ardently solicits, if he pathetically pleads to be admitted into the mystical body of Christ, by sprinkling or affusion; must the baptist resist all his importunities, and deny him his heart's desire? The Apostles were directed to "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." And is not baptism here expressly exacted? Are there any exceptions to its observance? Do you find that the twelve in executing their commission, either excused or repulsed any of the mortally sick and diseased? The respective answers are obvious. Baptism was emphatically required. No exceptions are made. It is not said, that the twelve excused or repulsed a single applicant. But were there not many sick in those days? Is not sickness still found to be among the best schoolmasters to bring us to Christ?

How then did the Apostles act? Did they, under these affecting circumstances, baptize or not? In the absence of all preconceived opinions and prejudices, their course can scarcely be doubted. For the command is imperative; no particular mode is prescribed; and the word, baptizo, is indiscriminately and properly rendered to sprinkle, to pour upon, and to immerse.

How then did they perform the ceremony? We read of some that were carried to Jesus on their beds and that he healed them. But show me a similar instance of the sick and dying being transported to the water side, and there plunged beneath the waters. The record is not to be found; the instance never occurred; and hence, combined with the preceding views, I conclude that this

solemn ordinance was administered at the house and bed of the invalid, and that he was not refused its sacramental virtue, when from among the strong and vigorous there were daily added to the Church of such as should be saved. Hence whenever a baptist divine is called upon to confer the initiatory sacrament of the Gospel upon the expiring sufferer, incapable of being immersed, I ask, whether it is better to obey the command of Christ, or rigidly to adhere to what must be considered a mere question of form, since ninety nine hundredths of the Christian world oppose his peculiar interpretation of the scriptures? I reply that if he does err, it is wiser to err on the safer side; wiser not to disobey a positive command to baptize, than to be afraid of falling into a ceremonial error. While I give him all credit for the purity of his motives, and the sincerity of his belief, I cannot but desire him seriously to reflect, that to refuse an anxious suppliant and endeavour to quiet his apprehensions upon a modal plea, is scarcely compatible with such passages as this, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to EVERY creature. He that believeth and is BAPTIZED shall be saved." If I am told as an excuse, that it is afterwards said, "but he that believeth not shall be damned;" Is not the omitted clause, "and is not baptized," substantially supplied in the gospel according to St. John? "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of WATER, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." "Charity hopeth all things, believeth all things." I hope and believe, that many of the unbaptized of Christian, as well as of heathen countries, will be saved. But charity doth not know, neither do I know. Upon an attentive perusal of the scriptures, the quantity of water is indeed with me a matter of perfect indifference. According to the rubrick and practice of the Church, I will not hesitate to employ every customary mode of baptism, and conscientiously maintain the validity of either and all. The Apostles laid their two hands upon such as were ordained to be the ministers of Christ, but should one of their successors in office by the providence of God be deprived of an arm, it would not in my estimation, in the slightest degree vitiate his subsequent ordinations.

Proceeding, therefore, in this brief survey, I now arrive at that other cause of separation from the Church, which is produced by our steadfast adherence to the practice of infant baptism. And here also I shall be compelled to waive a consideration of the most

common arguments, which have been marshalled for centuries on either side of the question. That, derived from the commission to baptize all NATIONS, is in my judgment perfectly sound and unanswerable, inasmuch as infants constitute a large proportion of every nation. The same may be said of the proof drawn from the analogy subsisting between the Jewish and Christian Churches, and which would be in part destroyed, provided infants were not admitted into the latter; and so of some others familiar to the recollection of most of you, however conclusive and satisfactory, I do not propose to dwell upon them in the abstract, on account of that very familiarity.

But amid the conflicting opinions of numerous interpreters of the bible: Are you in doubt about the propriety of dedicating your children to Christ by bringing them to his holy ordinance? Let that bible be examined, and tell me, Where do you find any prohibition? The question is indeed frequently reversed, and it is triumphantly demanded, Where do you find any command to baptize infants? We think and believe, that we discover it in the commission already referred to; but as our opponents deny this, I shall not enter upon the discussion; I shall prefer once more to recur to the doctrine of analogy, in order to expose the fallacy of their requiring what would be universally considered a positive requisition.

For this purpose, let us advert to the sacrament of the Lord's supper. Throughout the gospels, the acts, and epistles, you can descry no such thing as an express injunction entitling women to its reception; you can disclose no instance of its being actually administered to them. And yet, our baptist brethren freely admit them to this blessed memorial of our Lord's crucifixion and death. They cannot consent to indulge in the same kind of scruples, which they urge in relation to infants brought forward to receive the other sacrament. They do not or will not perceive, that these last are comprised in the expression "teach all nations, baptizing them;" but to the word YE, "except YE eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, YE have no life in you;" "As often as YE eat this bread, and drink this cup, YE do show the Lord's death till he come;" to the word MAN, "Let a MAN examine HIMSELF, and so let HIM eat of that bread, and drink of that cup;" to these words, they can attach a far more extensive signification, and easily reconcile themselves to the idea of their embracing the female portion of so-

1013 All doubts and difficulties are here readily overcome. They never ask, with an air of triumph, Where do you obtain direct and unquestionable authority for permitting women to partake of the holy eucharist? And thus I prove to you the fallacy and inconsistency of their imposing question pertaining to infant baptism; thus I prove to you, that the form preferred by us, Where do you find any prohibition against it? that this form is far more correct, and at the same time, strictly conformable to the example, they exhibit in a no less important particular.

And then as to the prohibition itself. In vain shall any man search the scriptures with the view of producing it. It exists not on the sacred page, and that it existed not in the mind of Christ, is evident from the circumstance to which I shall now call your attention. As the Jews, to whom the gospel was first preached, and by some of whom it was joyfully received; as they had been accustomed to see their infants enrolled among the members of the Hebrew Church, it were no more than reasonable to expect, that they should be clearly apprized of the alleged change in relation to the Christian, if such a change was divinely authorized. It was thus with the innumerable rites and ceremonies, which Paul appositely termed "a yoke of bondage." They were explicitly abolished, though not the benefits attending them. The absence of the sacrifice of sheep, and of oxen, and of the fat of fed beasts was more than compensated by the sacrifice of the true paschal Lamb. But if there were any benefits accompanying circumcision, and to deny it were impious, then if we have nothing answering to it in the Christian economy, then are our children less favoured of heaven, than were the children of the Jews, and even of the proselytes to their Church from among the surrounding heathen. And all this without one intimation from God, one such plain declaration as this; Your children must arrive at the years of discretion, they must be personally capable of believing in Jesus, and of truly repenting them of their sins, before they can possibly enjoy through baptism the privileges bestowed in the new dispensation of grace and glory. Is it possible to believe it? Never, no never can I consent to embrace a doctrine so adverse to the interests of our little ones, and therefore so much at variance with the benevolent character of their Father in heaven. While its tendency is, in this important particular, to exalt the Jewish above the Christian Church, I can never receive it upon the

more ground of inference. I must have something more explicit to prevent me from applying water to infant brows, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. It would ill accord with the affectionate manner of our Saviour, when he says, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." It would contradict the testimony of Peter in the first Apostolick sermon; "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your CHILDREN, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

And strongly, Brethren, am I fortified in these opinions by another circumstance to which your attention must be drawn. How extremely devoted were the Jews to the long cherished rites, ceremonies, and doctrines of their religion. How tenaciously did they regard them, and with what impatience did they look upon the smallest innovation proposed by our Saviour and his Apostles. Sanguinary as was the initiatory rite of their ancient Church, they yet leaned to it with the utmost bigotry of attachment, after they had received the Christian name. They could not endure the presence of a converted Gentile. But "when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them." And afterwards at Antioch, "certain men, which came down from Judea, taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." Even two of the Apostles found it difficult to divest themselves of their early prejudices upon the subject, as we may learn from this narrative of Paul. "When Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles; but when they were come, he withdrew, and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise, with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation." *

You may learn therefore, from these passages, and many more might be adduced, you may learn how wonderfully reluctant the Christianized Jews were to surrender one of the least prepossessing features of their exploded economy. How they contended with the

Apostles for admitting the Gentiles to the privileges of the Gospel in their uncircumcised state, and how, under this supposed privation, they denied the possibility of their being saved. And now I demand, Is it credible, that they who could thus argue and thus resolutely contend in favour of continuing a mere external ceremony; Is it credible, that they should entirely overlook the circumstance of their children being denied an entrance into the Christian Church by any ceremony whatever, which must have been the case, if infant baptism did not supply the place of circumcision?

Surely, Brethren, it is not natural; it corresponds not with the tender and affectionate feelings of parents towards their offspring, it militates extremely with the well known history of a remarkably rebellious and gainsaying people. I should much sooner have expected to witness, throughout their intercourse with the Apostles, the loudest murmurs and complaints against the new order of things. In some such language as this, they would have been very apt to denounce them and all their adherents; You pretend to meliorate our condition, and to take away a yoke, which you tell us neither we nor our fathers were able to bear: Why then this dreadful outrage upon our natural sympathies? Why do you give us a Church, which is to deprive us of our beloved children, which refuses to embrace them in its sheltering arms; which would rend asunder the ties so long and so happily preserved in our own inestimable Zion? It is no good thing that we hear of you; we cannot away with it; we reject it with the utmost scorn and indignation, we are free to declare unto you, that we greatly prefer our native altars; where our children are, there we will be; we will live and we will die with them.

Yes, Brethren, something of this kind I should certainly have expected from Jewish auditors, especially when the new doctrine, excluding infants from the Church, was first broached, and before they could have become familiarized and reconciled to it, by the persuasive arguments of inspired men. And yet, not one syllable of the kind was ever advanced. The opposers of the Gospel, who bitterly inveighed against our Saviour for permitting his disciples to pluck a few ears of corn upon the sabbath day; who reviled him for healing the sick at this season of sacred rest, never once thought of objecting to the Church planted by his Apostles, in consequence of this alleged innovation. Even they, who joined it, and were so de

scious of incorporating with it their favourite circumcision, never protested against so extraordinary a departure from the old paths. Their children are not so much as alluded to: their pretended disability does not extract so much as one tear from parental eyes, nor one exclamation of surprise or remonstrance from parental lips. About little things they were loud and vehement in their opposition; but about this so infinitely exceeding them in interest and importance, so deeply calculated to wound the tenderest sensibilities of their hearts, about this they were silent and unconcerned as the dead in their graves: Not only fathers, but mothers. "In Rama, was there" no "voice heard," no "lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and" refusing to "be comforted, because they" were exiled from the pale of the new Jerusalem.

Wonderful silence! Admirable stoicism! How are we to account for their existence? How are we to reconcile such glaring inconsistency? Simply by endeavouring to remove the veil from the eyes of the blind, and confidently asserting that there was no cause for excitement, no room for animadversion, no disfranchising decree pronounced against the children of Christians. Into the bosom of the Church, they could be admitted by baptism, as their predecessors had been previously admitted by circumcision. Had it been otherwise, all Judea would have been inflamed with resentment, the holy Land would have glowed with indignation. But the unbroken silence of scribes and pharisees, of hypocrites and sinners, of believers and unbelievers, of Apostles and disciples; this very silence furnishes a testimony in behalf of infant baptism, which the collected wisdom and ingenuity of its adversaries can never overturn.

With this negative, though conclusive evidence, the records of antiquity uniformly agree. Not one primitive writer denies the usage to be of Apostolick origin. Whoever traces it up to its source gives to it the sanction of this inspired authority. Justin Martyr of the second century, the celebrated author of *An Apology for the Christians*, speaking of certain believers, observes, "a part of these were sixty or seventy years old, who were made disciples to Christ from their infancy;" and I know of no other process but baptism, by which infants could have been made disciples.

Irenæus, a contemporary already mentioned, asserts, that "Christ

came to save all persons, who by him are born again unto God: Infants and little ones, and children, and youths, and elder persons;" and as our baptist friends will not contend that they were born again through faith in Jesus, how can they reconcile with their opinions his acknowledged application of this phrase to "infants and little ones."

Origen, of the third century, is still more direct; "Infants are baptized for the remission of sins." He also assures us, that "the Church hath received the tradition from the Apostles, that baptism ought to be administered to infants."

Cyprian, after the lapse of one hundred and fifty years from the death of the Apostles, with "sixty six bishops" sitting in council at Carthage, decided, that "the Church had allowed of it, yea that children had better right to baptism than elder persons."

The pious and learned Augustin, of the fourth and fifth centuries, declares, "The whole Church practises infant baptism; it was not instituted by councils, but was always in use;" and again, "this the Church has always maintained."

Testimony of the same character might be easily multiplied to an indefinite extent; but these extracts are sufficient; they are corroborated by the practice of the Syrian Church discovered by Buchanan, and must prove eminently satisfactory, if you reflect, that these holy fathers had no slight foundation in the scriptures to justify both the decisive language they employed, and that celebration of infant baptism, which they maintained, and of whose existence in their own times, they at least are credible witnesses. For when our Saviour says, "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God:" Why should we obstruct the only visible avenue to the arms, which once encircled and blessed them, and thus refuse them that baptism, by which alone, they can be united to his mystical body, the Church? When he affirms, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein:" Why should we contravene his word, and insist that men and women are alone capable of that reception? When he declares, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which BELIEVE in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea:" Why should we proclaim them void of the only faith, which our Saviour could have contemplated, the faith of

believing friends and relatives bringing them in pious charity to his holy baptism?

The truth is, that our divine Lord perpetually makes our own admission, into his glorious Church and kingdom, to depend very materially upon our growing resemblance to the innocence and simplicity of the infant mind. And I must confess to you, that my understanding is not sufficiently acute to perceive the propriety of that opposite doctrine and practice, which require of children, that they must lose their state of negative innocence, that they must grow up into men and women, and become like them, by being defiled with the many pollutions of sin, so as to be able to repent and turn to God with works meet for repentance; which require all this of children, before they can enjoy through baptism the privileges and benefits of a Church, of which Christ evidently considers them the fittest and the purest members. My understanding is not sufficiently acute for this, and therefore, Brethren, instead of insisting, that your infants shall become as you are, before I can consent to minister unto them the sacrament of baptism, I prefer, after the manner of the faithful and true Witness, to exhort those of you, who remain unbaptized, to resemble them ere you venture to seek this instituted mode of admission into the visible kingdom of God.

On the whole, it would appear, that our adherence to the doctrine of infant baptism furnishes a no more valid plea for a separate Church and communion, than does the manner in which the rite itself is celebrated. The bias, springing from early and deep rooted prejudice, may not indeed permit each individual among us to perceive the force and strength of the arguments submitted; but even when they are partially obscured by this, or some other congenial cause, it is of no trifling consequence to connect with the whole subject the claims, which we maintain from having in our possession the authorized ministry of the great Shepherd and Bishop of our Souls.

I remember, that this gracious Being once demanded; "Whether is greater the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?" And hence, a similar question strikes me, as extremely apt and cogent; Whether is greater, baptism, or the Church and ministry, which through Christ sanctify baptism? I think it extremely apt and cogent, because the correctness of the similitude and of the parts, of which it is composed, cannot be reasonably denied. Of the only fair and

true solution, I leave you to judge, merely remarking, that the thing conferred can never be greater than the authority by which it is conferred. Where then is that authority? To whom has our Saviour Christ, by his Apostles, so clearly committed the ministry of reconciliation, as to promise, that he will be with them; that he will acknowledge all their acts, and sanctify them to the soul's health of such, as rightly receive them? I reply, to the legally ordained ministers of his own Church, and not to those, who venture to administer the sacraments, and preach the word in Churches, that were never heard of prior to the era of the reformation: who contest the mode and the subjects of baptism, without previously vindicating their authority to baptize, in any mode whatever.

And may Almighty God, of his infinite mercy, give you wisdom to discern, and grace to follow and obey from the heart, that form of doctrine, which has been delivered you. May it prove unto you, not only profitable for doctrine; but for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that ye may be perfect, that ye may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. And to him, the Father, to the Son and Holy Ghost, three persons and one God, in the Unity of an ever blessed Trinity, shall be ascribed all the honour, and glory, and dominion, and praise, world without end. AMEN.

SERMON IX.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

YOU are aware, Brethren, that the defence of the Church, in which I am now engaged, is founded upon her close adherence to divine institutions. Usages indifferent in themselves have not been brought forward in a prominent manner. They must be debated

and settled on the sole ground of expediency, and be left subject to such after changes or modifications, as the sage and judicious may consider advisable. But when you approach the sacred volume, no longer may you determine for yourselves, by presuming to annul what God hath established. No longer may you hesitate to put forth your best exertions, in endeavouring to adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things. His ordinances are holy. His commands are imperative. They must be revered, and they must be obeyed. Wherever violated, wherever discarded in favour of the "witty inventions" of men, ignorance is the best excuse, the only admissible plea, and even this, in those cases merely, in which essentials are still preserved, and the heart is sensibly alive to the righteousness, which is of God, by faith.

And happy am I, in the belief, that this truly benign and merciful Being will not be severely strict to mark offences: Happy in believing, that, "if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." So that if he knows nothing of episcopacy; nothing of its divine authority; to condemn him, who, under different circumstances, would most gladly embrace it, comports not with the pleasing views I am delighted to cherish in relation to the goodness, and benevolence; and mercy of our Father in heaven.

It is for the obstinate and refractory, the presumptuous violators of his will and word, that he will hereafter muster all his terrors and visit them with his sore displeasure. For them, it will prove no slight affair, to have attempted all in their power to rob his Church of its glory, his ministers of their authority, and his gospel of its intended harmonious influence over the hearts of men. But, at the great day of account, a rigid inquiry will be instituted; if I may be permitted the expression, a solemn inquest held over the mangled body of Christ: When some such interrogations as these will be very apt to put down the high look and the proud heart of the scorner. Why did ye cast off the Zion of my choice, and the spouse of mine anointed? Why did ye cease to "walk about Zion and go round about her," to "tell the towers thereof," to "mark well her bulwarks" and "consider her palaces, that ye" might "tell it to the generation following?" Why did ye forsake her, the true bride of "the fountain of living waters," and in preference hew out to yourselves "cisterns, broken cisterns, that"

could "hold no water?" I gave ye my sabbaths and my sanctuaries, but ye have polluted them by your strifes and contentions; my Church, but ye have wasted it with heresy and schism; my ministering servants and ambassadors, but ye have lifted up the heel against them, and usurped their office; my gospel and its ordinances, but ye have moulded the one after the imagination of your own hearts, and renounced the other in compliance with human counsels and worldly prejudices. Yes, Brethren, interrogations and declarations, such as these, will doubtless probe the disembodied spirit of many a wanton schismatick in the day of recompense, and no easy matter will it be found to disarm the arrows of the Almighty of their sting, and extenuate numerous flagrant departures from the written word.

In the number of these, I have ever regarded the rejection of the holy rite of confirmation, or the laying on of hands upon private Christians, as among the most extraordinary and unjustifiable. It is indeed a subject little thought of, and consequently little understood in this western world. Few, perhaps, have ever heard of such an institution, or if they have heard, it has been from the mouth of the reviler, branding it as one of the many remnants of papal superstition, originally devised during the dark ages, and surreptitiously brought to light in the hope and expectation of bewildering the intellects, and fettering the consciences of men. With what justice, with what sincere reverence for divine and heavenly things, I propose to examine, and great will be my disappointment, if a failure should ensue, in this attempt to establish the scriptural foundation of the rite, its repeated celebration by the Apostles, and its universal reception in the primitive Church.

To begin with its scriptural foundation; I know of but one passage where it is specifically spoken of in the abstract, or disconnected with its commemoration. But then so clearly and distinctly, that he who runs may read and understand. It is by St. Paul in the sixth chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews: St. Paul, who had previously rebuked certain disciples for their ignorance of "the first principles of the oracles of God;" who had accused them of becoming "such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat;" although it "belongeth to them that are of full age;" and who, from these premises, drew the inference, "Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection;

not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of **LAYING ON OF HANDS**, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment." As if he had said: Let us no longer linger in the vestibule, when we should penetrate the interiour edifice of the gospel. Let us no longer be obliged to investigate and master its primary truths and fundamental axioms. These should be already familiar to our minds, and instead of requiring additional research, we had much better evince their practical influence on our lives, by relinquishing all doubtful disputations about their efficacy, and all subtle inquiries pertaining to their general obligation. As the rudiments of our Saviour's doctrine, we cannot fail to embrace them; we might as well renounce him for our teacher, as attempt to forego them; we must confide in them, as divinely ordained, and unsusceptible of change; so that not laying again their foundation, not daring to question their integrity, we must leave them as so many undoubted principles indelibly written upon our hearts, and happily enabling us to perfect our pursuit of religion, from a full persuasion of their elementary truth.

With this fair and natural construction of the Apostle's argument, I proceed to remark, that he enumerates the "laying on of hands," among the leading articles of the Christian faith. But lest it should be thought to refer to ministerial ordination, your attention is invited to a very plain and radical distinction. Ordination is a ceremony necessarily limited to such as devote themselves to the work of the ministry; it has not the universal application involved by the language of Paul: Who addresses himself to the great body of his countrymen, and not to the clerical orders; who invites them, without any discrimination whatever, as believers, and not as evangelists, to leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ. There is consequently, no reasonable pretence for singling out one article from the residue, and confining its operation to any one description of men. In this case, it would be, not so much one of the constituent principles of the gospel, as the prescribed mode of designating the authorized teachers of those principles.

Besides, in the passage before us, it is associated with subjects, having the most comprehensive signification. Repentance and faith are required of all. Baptism is an ordinance, from which no Christian can rightfully plead exemption. The resurrection of the

dead and eternal judgment are events in which all mankind will hereafter participate. Confirmation or the laying on of hands must therefore, by the rule of analogy, be a doctrine of equal obligation and extent. For no other reason was it classed with principles, constituting the basis of our religion; for no other reason was it enumerated immediately after baptism, but to show its proper place in the order of events. As faith follows repentance, and an eternal judgment, the resurrection of the dead; so does, and should, the laying on of hands succeed to the reception of baptism.

But not to detain you longer with inductions however legitimate, let us advert, Brethren, to Apostolick usage, to facts, which have ever been considered stubborn things, and that will be found to bear me out most triumphantly in this course of reasoning. In the eighth chapter of the Acts, it appears that when Philip, one of the seven deacons, "went down to the city of Samaria," "preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." And still, something more was deemed essential to the completion of their Christian character. Nor is the reason withheld. It was because the Holy Ghost "was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." Hence, "when the Apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost." And then, continues the inspired writer, "then LAID THEY THEIR HANDS on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."

Could any narrative be more satisfactory? Both men and women were the subjects of baptism, and of the subsequent rite. It could not, therefore, be the same with ministerial ordination. Is it possible for any history, written for our instruction, to be more minute and circumstantial, or to exhibit a more practical commentary on the sixth of Hebrews? St. Paul, in that chapter, speaks of six distinct principles of the doctrine of Christ, and here were two of them publicly administered in the precise order, in which they are there arranged; the baptism of private Christians, by Philip the deacon, being almost immediately followed by the laying on of the hands of Peter and John, the Apostles.

Nor are we to wonder at the alacrity of their attendance. It was the first attempt to spread the doctrines of the risen Saviour beyond the borders of Judea, and this circumstance rendered it highly important, that every thing connected with the transaction should assume the form of an established precedent, and as such be handed down to future ages, as worthy of all imitation. But as Philip was only a subordinate officer in the Church, he could not celebrate the rite of confirmation, and the Apostles instantly deputed two of their number to remedy the deficiency; in what they considered a pressing exigency, to celebrate this holy ordinance. So that notwithstanding the neglect and practical contempt, which it sustains in this eventful age, at the hands of the seceding Churches; believe me, Brethren, it should be with us a source of unfeigned pleasure to reflect, that the first mission ever undertaken by the Apostles, in their character of evangelists, was for the express purpose of imposing hands upon the baptized converts of Samaria.

Neither let us be persuaded to think ourselves released from its reception on the ground, that the course pursued was extraordinary in its character, and restricted in its design. For if this be true. How could the laying on of hands be termed one of "the first principles of the oracles of God?" How are we to account for its being again resorted to in the instance of the twelve disciples of John, whom St. Paul met at Ephesus, and directly inquired, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had LAID HIS HANDS upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied."

See ye not therefore, Brethren, how completely the whole tenour of this transaction corresponds with the preceding? In that, baptism was followed by confirmation and the descent of the Holy Ghost. So in this. In that, it was an inferiour minister, who baptized and Apostolick hands, that confirmed. So in this. Paul hav-

ing elsewhere thanked God that he had baptized none, but Crispus and Gaius, and the household of Stephanas. And what additional evidence can any man in reason require, either in favour of confirmation itself, or in proof of its being only performed by the highest order in the Christian priesthood? An order now known to episcopalians alone; in whose judgment, and as you have already seen, in the judgment of all antiquity, bishops are the duly authorized successors and representatives of the Apostles, by whom they were exclusively empowered both to ordain and confirm in the one holy universal Church. What additional evidence can any man in reason require?

I repair as usual to the fathers of the primitive Church, and find myself at once surrounded by testimony, inferior only to that of the Apostles. Among the most renowned of them is Tertullian, a writer of acknowledged merit of the second century, about eighty years after the death of John. He informs us, in the clearest terms, that "After baptism, is the laying on of hands; by blessing and prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit, who graciously descends from the Father upon the bodies cleansed and blessed by baptism." And again, "The flesh is sealed, that the soul may be defended, the flesh is shadowed by imposition of hands, that the soul may be illuminated by the Spirit."

To him succeeded, after the lapse of fifty years, Cyprian the famous bishop of Carthage, who is not less explicit in his language, and indeed traces up confirmation to the Apostles themselves: "They who believed in Samaria, were baptized; prayer was said over them, and hands laid upon them, that the Holy Ghost might be invoked and poured upon them; which" he continues "is still the custom with us, that they who are baptized into the Church, should be solemnly dedicated by the bishops of the Church, and may receive the Holy Ghost by the imposition of hands."

Cornelius, of the same age, and bishop of Rome, speaking of a celebrated disorganizer, uses these remarkable words; "Though Novatus were baptized, yet being not consummated with the seal of confirmation, he could not receive the Holy Ghost."

Ambrose, bishop of Milan, who flourished in the middle of the fourth century, reminds the youthful Christian, "Thou hast received the spiritual seal, God the Father hath sealed thee, Christ hath confirmed thee." And elsewhere, "By imposition of hands it is

believed the Spirit may be received, which is wont to be done after baptism, by the bishop, for the confirmation of unity in the Church."

More copious evidence than this cannot surely be expected; it supersedes the necessity of argument, and I will only annex the equally satisfactory account of Jerome, who lived in the fourth century, and who observes; "It is the custom of the Church for bishops to go and invoke the Holy Spirit by imposition of hands, on such as were baptized by presbyters and deacons, in villages and places remote from the mother Church." "Do you ask," he says, "where this is written? In the Acts of the Apostles," is his reply. Words more definite or luminous, cannot be chosen, and when united with the preceding extracts, they form the unequivocal testimony of numerous highly distinguished and pious Christian divines of the primitive Church, in favour of the Apostolick origin and universal observance of confirmation, or the laying on of hands upon the disciples of Jesus.

Who then shall presume to disparage its virtue, or to pronounce it an innovation upon ecclesiastical discipline and the ordinances divinely established? Are we wiser than the Fathers, more competent to understand the facts recorded in the scriptures, and better qualified to bear testimony to the doctrines and institutions, which obtained in the earliest times? Are we even wiser than those scriptures themselves, than Paul, and Peter, and John, who spake and acted as they were moved by the Holy Ghost? Let me not hear of Roman Catholick corruptions, a most favourite theme, with which to impose upon the prejudices of the multitude. 'This rite and these testimonies existed long before the rise of popery, and the single circumstance of its unlimited adoption speaks volumes in behalf of its heavenly origin.

Upon no other principle can we account for the undeviating practice of it, on the part of all Christendom. If it had been the invention of uninspired men, opposition would have discovered itself in some quarter or other. But in the best and purest ages, it appears to have been as extensively known and embraced as either of the sacraments; an event, that would have been morally impossible, had it not commenced in demonstration of the Spirit and in power; and therefore Jerome boldly argues, "if there were no authority of scripture for it, yet the consent of all the world, in this particular, is as good as a command;" that is, as clearly shows its Apostolick

derivation. You cannot say this of presbyterianism or of publick extemporary prayer; they never were universal; they sprung into existence in the sixteenth century, have always been strenuously opposed, and are still neglected by an immense majority of Christians.

Happy then, Brethren, are those, who adhere to a Church, under whose auspices, they may yet enjoy the sanctifying ordinance under review; this merciful medium of grace, recommended to our affectionate regard, as well by its divine sanction, as by the universal usage of all, who for the first fifteen centuries of the Christian dispensation, named the name of Christ.

And even when the reformation in continental Europe introduced, through what was deemed necessity, a new order of things, throwing away with the tares of superstition, many pure grains of heavenly wheat; even then it was but slowly and with great apparent reluctance, that the rite of confirmation, was abandoned. I gather this from Calvin, who would seem to identify it, with the laying on of hands enumerated among the rudiments of Christianity by St. Paul, and who remarks, that "Young persons, when their infancy was past, and they had been instructed in their faith, offered themselves for catechism, which they had after baptism; but another rite was applied, viz: the imposition of hands" In another work, the fourth book of his institutes, he even explains the benefits attached to its celebration, saying, "It was an ancient custom in the Church for the children of Christians, after they were come to years of discretion, to be presented to the bishop, in order to fulfil that duty which was required of adults who offered themselves to baptism. For such persons were placed among the catechumens, till, being duly instructed in the mysteries of Christianity, they were enabled to make a confession of their faith before the bishop and all the people. Therefore, those who had been baptized in their infancy, because they had not then made such a confession of faith before the Church, at the close of childhood, or the commencement of adolescence, were again presented by their parents, and were examined by the bishop according to the form of the catechism which was then in common use. That this exercise, which deserved to be regarded as sacred and solemn, might have the greater dignity and reverence, they also practised the ceremony of imposition of hands. Thus the youth, after having given satisfaction respecting his faith, was dismissed with a solemn benediction."

Thus you perceive, that while he acknowledges it to have been required of persons baptized in adult years, he also admits, that the custom was very ancient in relation to such as were baptized in infancy. Afterwards he confesses, that Jerome considered it "a custom of the Apostles," and that he represented it to have been "committed wholly to the bishops." The great reformer was indeed utterly opposed, as we are, to the Roman views of confirmation being a sacrament of the Gospel; but still, at the conclusion of the passages I have cited, he observes, "Such imposition of hands, therefore, as is simply connected with benediction, I highly approve, and wish it was now restored to its primitive use, uncorrupted by superstition." How similar to the solicitude expressed by Melancthon on the subject of episcopacy; "I would to God it lay in me to restore the government of bishops." But alas it is more easy to open the floodgates of error, than, once opened, to arrest the desolating progress of the stream. The reformers found it thus. Melancthon sighed in vain for an Apostolick episcopacy; Calvin, for what we contend to be the equally Apostolick rite of confirmation. They could not control the waters themselves had taught to flow. Carried away by the impetuous torrent, they could not prevail upon the new Churches to retrace their misguided steps. Luther was wiser, he retained the rite under discussion; it is still practised in the Lutheran Churches, and by those in Bohemia. But by our own diversified sects, it is altogether renounced; it is reserved to episcopalians alone to yield a hearty obedience to its scriptural authority, and to partake of its spiritual blessings.

In what manner, you may discover by a reference to the book of Common Prayer, in which the ceremony commences with an exposition of the following import; "To the end that confirmation may be ministered to the more edifying of such as shall receive it, the Church hath thought good to order, that none shall be confirmed, but such as can say the creed, the Lord's prayer, and the ten commandments; and can also answer to such other questions, as in the short catechism are contained: Which order is very convenient to be observed; to the end that children, being now come to years of discretion, and having learned what their Godfathers and Godmothers promised for them in baptism, may themselves, with their own mouth and consent, openly before the Church ratify and confirm the same; and also promise, that, by the grace of God, they will ever-

some endeavour themselves faithfully to observe such things as they, by their own confession, have assented unto."

Confirmation, in her judgment, is, therefore, properly administered to all baptized persons; who have attained an adequate knowledge of the elementary principles of their religion, and are so fully convinced of the necessity of making them the practical rule of their lives and conversation, as publicly to re-enact those baptismal vows, wherein they had before, either by themselves or by their sureties, "renounced the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the sinful desires of the flesh;" wherein they had declared their assent to "all the articles of the Christian faith, as contained in the Apostles' creed;" and solemnly covenanted, by the divine assistance, to "keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of their life."

The language of the exposition is indeed more immediately applicable to such as were baptized in infancy. But this has probably resulted from the desire of excluding candidates, until they have arrived at a suitable age, and does by no means militate with the confirming of persons, who from prejudice or gross misapprehension were suffered to remain destitute of this supplementary sign and seal of an inward and spiritual grace, during the period of their minority. For the bishop invariably inquires, "Do ye here, in the presence of God, and of this congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow that ye made, or that was made in your name, at your baptism; ratifying and confirming the same; and acknowledging yourselves bound to believe and to do all those things which ye then undertook, or your sponsors then undertook for you?" So that there is no exception. In the opinion of the Church, all persons that have been baptized should be confirmed.

Before however the ceremony can be rightly entertained, the recipients must possess the requisite qualifications, and these are, "repentance whereby they forsake sin; and faith whereby they steadfastly believe in the promises of God." Of all which they are seriously reminded in the exposition and question already rehearsed, when upon an affirmative answer the act of confirmation succeeds: The bishop craves the blessing of Almighty God, with the gracious influences of the Holy Ghost; and, while each candidate is prostrate upon his knees, imposes hands upon his head, and pro-

nounces the affecting benediction; "Defend, O Lord, this thy child (or, this thy servant) with thy heavenly grace; that he may continue thine forever, and daily increase in thy Holy Spirit more and more, until he come unto thy everlasting kingdom." After which, other prayers ensue, whose general purport it is to implore such continued vouchsafements of divine aid and favour, as may enable the confirmed to lead the residue of their lives according to the profession then made; a profession that bespeaks their anxiety to be found in the paths of obedience, and that is also preparatory to their admission to the supper of the Lord.

Not however, that every individual, who makes it, necessarily becomes a communicant; because there are many, who still consider themselves unprepared for that holy mystery, and there are others, whose after conduct so wretchedly belies their most solemn protestations, as to render this blessed consummation of their Christian calling altogether inexpedient and improper. Neither on the other hand is it absolutely required previous to the reception of the sacrament. For if you examine the rubrick at the termination of the service, it is there provided, that "none be admitted to the Holy Communion, until such time as he be confirmed, or be ready and desirous to be confirmed." The latter clause being added on account of the infrequency, and sometimes the entire absence of episcopal visitations, when all godly and piously disposed persons, who intend to avail themselves of the introductory rite, at the earliest opportunity, are readily received, and allowed to partake of the symbolized body and blood of Christ.

The invitation given by us to feed upon these sacred mysteries is indeed most free and comprehensive. It is like that recorded in the scriptures, "Come; for all things are now ready." All hearers are exhorted to consider "the great peril of the unworthy receiving thereof; and so to search and examine" their "consciences that" they "may come holy and clean to such an heavenly feast in the marriage garment required by God in holy scripture." They are publicly addressed in these solemn words, "Ye who do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbours, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways; draw near with faith, and take this holy sacrament to your comfort." They are also encouraged, in case of self-condemning

apprehensions, to open their grief to the minister of God's word, that they "may receive such godly counsel and advice, as may tend to the quieting of their "consciences, and the removing of all scruple and doubtfulness."

But then, after these invitations, warnings, and encouragements, we leave them to determine their duty between themselves and their God. We erect no tribunal, from among their brethren of the laity, for the purpose of severely scrutinizing their hearts, of sitting in judgment upon the sacred operations of God's Holy Spirit, and deciding the extent of his progress in each individual, through the medium of questions and answers, and by the passage of a final vote of admission or rejection. We think, that a jurisdiction of this inquisitorial character, is contrary to the example of the Apostles, who never appear to have consulted their previous converts, as to the propriety of receiving any individuals into the Christian Church. We think it directly opposed to the inspired command, "Judge not, that ye be not judged;" and are content to refer these things to those, whose office it is to administer the sacraments of the gospel, constantly inviting the penitent and faithful to their reception, and only repulsing such as are "open and notorious evil livers."

Yes, Brethren, these are the principles, and this is the practice of the Church. We require the professions made at the baptismal font, prior to admission at the holy communion, and with the explanation I have given, the subsequent rite of confirmation. But these preparatory steps are burdened by no judicial process and investigation on the part of laicks. Against all such interference we solemnly protest, and are happy in the belief, that our views are substantially maintained, by some of the great pillars of the dissenting Churches.

I shall here present you with the sentiments of a no less distinguished divine of the presbyterian sect, than Dr. Mason, formerly of New-York. "God hath reserved to himself the prerogative of exploring secret motives, "I Jehovah search the heart, and try the reins." And it is a source of ineffable consolation, that none but himself can try them. The obstruction of the creature is completely barred out by his own unchangeable constitution. I bless him for it. I had rather perish than have my heart searched by man or angels; and I put them all at defiance to declare what passes in my breast any further than I myself inform them by my

own act. Whoever therefore maintains that the reality of conversion is the reason of admission to Christian privileges lays down a rule that can never be applied. There are none who furnish more conclusive evidence of its nullity, than those who most warmly contend for it. A single observation will put this in a strong light. They who without the aid of a revelation, either from myself or my Creator, can read my hidden thoughts on one occasion, can read them on any other. Therefore if they can ascertain sincerity in religion, they can equally ascertain it in their civil transactions; and consequently would never be imposed upon. But to such lengths, they do not pretend to go: that is, they proclaim the falsity of their own doctrine and the futility of their own rule. How dare they, who cannot detect a perjury in the custom house, or a lie in the shop, represent themselves as able to detect hypocrisy in religious professions? It is foolish conceit, it is contemptible quackery.—Take notice how they use their own rule. They get a man to recount his experience. If satisfied with that, they set him down as converted. You see, that for the facts on which they build their judgment, they have all his own word; and yet they talk of ascertaining his state! Two plain questions on this head, and we shall leave them.—If their man should say nothing at all, how would they find out his state?—If he should happen to amuse them with a tale of experience, such as they approved and he never felt, where is their knowledge of his state?—As for those who undertake to discern spirits, without producing their authority from the Father of spirits, under his broad seal of miracles, nothing is so amazing about them as their effrontery. All sober men should eschew them as jugglers and impostors. An astrologer who casts nativities from the aspects of the planets; or a strolling gipsy who predicts the history of life from the palm of a child's hand, is as worthy of credence as they."

After this long extract, sound in principle and powerful in expression, there is no necessity of my appending a single observation in support of the practice prevailing in our primitive Church. Its mode of admission to the table of the Lord is in perfect unison with the scriptures, and is alike admirably adapted to check the presumption of the fanatic, and to repress the operations of a self-righteous and censorious spirit.

In drawing to a conclusion, Brethren, allow me to remark to you, that throughout the confirmation service, there is evidently displayed the same devotional fervour and unaffected humility, which pervade every part of our beautiful liturgy, and that almost force upon the worshipper corresponding sentiments of piety and self-abasement. There is also a manifest propriety in renewing our baptismal engagements, especially if entered into during the unconscious hours of infancy, which strongly recommends the universal reception of the rite itself, as eminently calculated to impress the young, with a lasting sense of the importance of religion, and of the imperious obligation of submitting in spirit and in truth to all the ordinances of our blessed Lord and Master, whether originating in his own, or in the ministry of his chosen Apostles.

I have indeed sometimes thought of confirmation, that it might have been anticipated in those memorable words of Christ; "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Certain it is, that those confirmed, by Peter, and John, and Paul, are represented to have been first baptized or born of water, and afterwards to have received or to have been born of the Holy Ghost, at the laying on of the Apostles' hands. Certain it is, that Paul hath made an obvious distinction between "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;" and it is far from impossible, but that confirmation may be implied in the latter phrase, as well as baptism in the former; it is far from impossible, but that the unconsciously baptized infant may be only born of water, while it is reserved for the confirmed adult, worthily embracing the ordinance, to be born of the Spirit. Of the Ephesians converted in mature years, it is written in relation to their spiritual union with Christ; "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed," and belief we know was immediately followed by baptism, "ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." Wherein the word "sealed," in the opinion of the ancient fathers, conveyed alike the idea of the outward sign of laying hands upon the head, and of the inward grace impressed upon the heart.

In favour of the present suggestion, there is besides the declaration of Peter; "Repent, and be BAPTIZED every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall re-

ceive the GIFT of the Holy Ghost." There is this affirmation of John the baptist; "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." There is the well known fact, that the Apostles, who had partaken of this baptism, were directed by the risen Saviour, "that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard from me." And then succeeds the explanation; "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence;" evidently referring to the miraculous effusion of the Spirit upon them, on the day of Pentecost. There is finally, the extraordinary spectacle exhibited at the baptism of our Lord; "Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting upon him."

In hazarding the preceding opinion, as having occasionally crossed my mind, I am therefore far from being unsustained by the language of scripture. It is indeed the most probable judgment, that can be formed of the passages recited. The longer we reflect upon them, the deeper will the conviction be impressed upon our understandings, and the greater our confidence, that doctrines are often boldly maintained upon much more equivocal premises. But whether correct, or incorrect, I know to a certainty, that confirmation, or the laying on of hands upon private Christians, is distinctly set forth in three several passages of holy writ, and that it was fully acceded to and practised by the spiritual fathers of the primitive Church. I know, that wherever it is enjoyed, it obviates much of the clamour against infant baptism, arising from the absence of the supposed prerequisites; inasmuch as infants, when arrived at maturity, can, at the time of its reception, take upon themselves those promises of faith, repentance, and obedience, which were made in their name by the believing sponsors, who brought them to Christ. I know, that it is in itself an ordinance most appropriate, impressive, and solemn, and that whoever partakes of it, with a glad heart, a willing and understanding mind, is thereby "sealed by the Holy Spirit of God unto the day of redemption."

More than this I need not urge. It is sufficient to justify our Church, for her continued observance in common with an immense

majority of believers, of a pious, venerable and Apostolick institution. The question indeed very naturally occurs, whether by this course she does not afford a stricter example of obedience to the oracles of God, than those various orders of sectarians, who have combined to lay it aside, as a thing of naught. The question very naturally occurs, and the answer cannot be mistaken; although it is perhaps better to waive a more explicit reply, lest in asserting the greater purity of our revered Zion, I should be thought to criminate the motives, as well as the practice of our fellow Christians; when He, who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins, well knows, that had I the mantle of Elijah, I would gladly convert it into a robe of charity, and extend its shadow to the four corners of the earth; there being much to esteem, and much to love among our brethren of other folds.

And yet, so long as it is apparent in the nature of things, that the most High God must be more pleased with sincerity in the way of truth, than with sincerity in that of error: So long it is our duty to hold fast to the altar, the worship, the ministry of our protestant episcopal Church; and so long should it be our pleasure to conform ourselves, with reverent submission, to all the pious usages and institutions, which have been perpetuated within her sanctuary from the very period, when they were first established by the inspired wisdom and authority of the holy Apostles.

It is in this manner, that we shall outwardly exhibit to the world our attachment to the injunctions of our divine Lord and Master. It is in this manner, that the unconfirmed, if they possess a true and lively faith in the efficacy of his redemption, will embrace the earliest opportunity of repairing to his authorized ambassadors, and like the converts of Samaria, and the disciples of Ephesus, reap the spiritual benefits attending the imposition of their hands, even those blessed gifts of the Spirit, which were once known to have accompanied the ceremony, as it is written, "Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." AMEN

SERMON X.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake
I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness,
and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

IF there are any persons upon the face of the globe, calling themselves Christians, who profess to discard the assembling of themselves together, for the avowed object of worshipping the Lord God of their fathers, if there are any such persons I am ignorant of their existence. I know not the sect to which they belong. Their numbers must be too insignificant to require a passing notice from the most zealous defenders of our formularies of publick worship.

Infidels are in this respect the only opposers, the sole deriders of a species of devotion commended to every man's conscience by the authentick words of scripture, and to the propriety of whose observance, both Jews and Christians have from the earliest times united in bearing their decided testimony. Here, with the true followers of the Lamb, there is no diversity of sentiment. All concur in advocating the publick worship of God. All esteem it one of the most essential features of a religious life. All, who recognise the holy sabbath as a divine institution, devote some portion of its sacred hours, openly and avowedly, to the reasonable service of their Great Creator and Almighty Friend.

They differ indeed, as to the mode of conducting the ceremony. Unhappily for the peace and prosperity of Zion, they agree not as to the posture of the body during its performance, whether it should be bowed down or erect; nor as to the spiritual part, whether it should be with precomposed or with extemporary prayers. It is even too true to be seriously denied, that there is scarcely an epithet of derision or of reproach, which has not been liberally applied to all those publick forms and ceremonies, which have for ages prevailed in the Church, as peculiarly appropriate in the expression of

human homage and human dependence. I will not repeat one from the long and disgraceful catalogue. They must be familiar to your recollection, and have doubtless proved among the most successful weapons, which have been brandished against us by the art and subtlety of man's device. I prefer a more calm and dispassionate investigation, than would be likely to result from the refutation of coarse invective, and, must I say it, of the grossest ribaldry. I prefer, with the scriptures in my hand, with reason in my mouth, and the temper becoming the minister of the lowly Jesus in my heart; I prefer with these, to defend and vindicate all the usages of our much injured Church, in her house of prayer and praise.

To begin with the subject of least comparative importance; I fear that many zealous religionists have not hesitated to condemn every organized mode of bodily worship, or at best, that they have so simplified and cramped exterior reverence, that the bare powers of vision would often fail to instruct us, as to the precise nature of their assemblies, whether they were collected together, as listeners or as worshippers. But that nothing, wearing the semblance of indifference, should take place in outward devotion, reason itself combines with the voice of scripture, and proclaims its impropriety upon the clearest and most satisfactory grounds.

We are certainly, as much indebted to the goodness of God for the formation of the body, as for that of the soul, and they are equally and inseparably connected in the obligations resulting from the continued preservation of life and happiness. Ought there not then to be an united expression of gratitude and adoration; an expression as visible to the eye, as audible to the ear? Shall the body receive good at the hand of the Lord, shall it be fed, and clothed, and sustained in sickness and in health, and still refer the solemn act of returning homage to the soul alone? Forbid it nature, whose sympathies, pervading untaught the bosom of her meanest children, invariably produce some external mark and gesture of humility towards the object of their prevailing hopes and fears. Forbid it civilized society, whose constant solicitude it is to render significant tokens of honour in the presence of those, whom either the endowments of the mind, or the virtues of the heart; whom even the fortune of arms, the glitter of wealth, or the pomp and circumstance of office have enabled to reach an elevated rank in the scale of being. And shall we not, with these things perpetually occurring before

our eyes, freely admit, that the Creator of the universe, He, in whom the body lives, and moves, and has its being, possesses some substantial claims upon its pious reverence? Shall we not cheerfully concede, that it is very meet, and right, and our bounden duty, in our intercourse with his sacred courts, to adopt such corporeal postures, as will clearly evince our solemn belief of his own inspired annunciation, "Here will I dwell?"

Surely, Brethren, it is a conduct so natural and becoming, so strikingly expedient and praiseworthy, that I am lost in astonishment, whenever I reflect that the external religious ceremonies of our Church were among the moles and eyesores most bitterly inveighed against in the days of puritanical schism and intolerance. We are too frail in our natures, too wayward in our fancies, to rely entirely upon the good desires and dispositions of the soul, and consequently publick worship to be celebrated in the beauty of holiness requires all the extrinsick aid, within the compass of our ability to employ.

Accordingly we find, that all the holy men of God, whose praise is in the scriptures ever resorted to some devotional attitudes or other, as useful auxiliaries to the spirit, in offering up the sacrifices of prayer and praise. The spreading forth of the hands unto the Lord in the heavens, was observed by Moses, after one of his interviews with the prevaricating Pharaoh; by David, when his soul was famished in a dry and thirsty land; and by the wisest of men, when in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, he dedicated the temple, which was filled with the excellent glory. The prostration of the body, or falling upon the face, was also practised by the Jewish lawgiver, when for the space "of forty days and forty nights," he "did neither eat bread nor drink water, because of the sins" of the people, and by the holy Job, when informed of the loss of his substance, and the untimely death of his children. For he "arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said," "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

Nor in this enumeration, let me fail to remind you, that genuflection or the bending of the knee, a position so humbly adopted by the Church, is amply supported in sacred writ, by the authority of the psalmist, who exhorting all the people to the worship of God exclaimed, "O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel be--

fore the Lord our Maker:" By the authority of Daniel, who regularly "kneeled upon his knees, three times a day, and prayed." By the authority of the protomartyr Stephen; for, commending his spirit to the Lord Jesus, and imploring the pardon of his murderers, "he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge;" By the authority of Peter and Paul, who severally "kneeled down and prayed;" the one, when reanimating the corpse of the much lamented Tabitha, and the other, when bidding a last affectionate adieu to those weeping elders of Ephesus, who were to "see his face no more." By the authority of the blessed Saviour of sinners himself, who in the garden of Gethsemane, when his soul was "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," according to St. Luke, "kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done."

Thus then, the holy scriptures present us with the most unexceptionable testimony in favour of external worship, without recurring to the rites and ceremonies enjoined upon the Jewish Church. All the holy men that I have instanced, together with their Master, in the most interesting situations that can be imagined, neglected not to precede their addresses to the throne of grace, with a corresponding corporeal act of devotion. If their wants were ever so urgent, if their danger ever so imminent, still before presuming to implore the interference of heaven, they spread abroad the hands; they fell upon the face; they kneeled.

Let it not therefore be thought beneath the dignity of Christians to follow their example. Let it not be doubted, but that such expressive demonstrations have a powerful influence in promoting intense and fervent supplication and prayer. If the structure of our edifices be such, as to make it inconvenient to fall upon the face, we can yet fall upon our knees, when we are, or ought to be, confessing our sins; when we are interceding for their pardon, and invoking all those mercies and blessings, which we are emboldened to seek for, in the name, and through the merits and mediation of our Saviour Christ. A sitting posture is certainly less becoming and reverent. I know indeed, that David is once represented to have "sat before the Lord," and prayed, and that Nehemiah "sat down, and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven." But before these examples can be fairly cited

as justifying precedents in our day, we should at least be sure, that they have been maturely weighed and conscientiously adopted. For otherwise, and unless some infirmity of the body supervenes, sedentary prayer can scarcely prove acceptable to God, scarcely prove a sacrifice, in which he shall be well pleased, and ready and willing to answer from heaven his dwelling place.

Similar remarks apply to the erect posture, extremely appropriate in praise, where the spirit of a man should be elevated, ardent, and sublime. It was the sole devotional employment of Adam in the days of his innocence, and was doubtless uttered in a manner, which evinced that there was no fear in love. Wherefore in magnifying the Lord Most High, for the inestimable gift of the second Adam, we may, with singular propriety, lift up our bodies with those emotions of perfect love, which cast out fear, and pronounce the praises of redeeming love, in an attitude suited to the rapture and rejoicing of our souls. But in prayer, there is something in the bended knee more characteristick of those feelings of reverence and humility, of dependence and submission, of sorrow and contrition for sin, which ought fully to pervade the heart, in our applications for divine mercy and protection.

The scriptures are certainly greatly in its favour, and it may not be too much to assert, that no one single instance can be produced, where an erect position was maintained throughout publick prayer. The case of "the publican standing afar off," and who "smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner," is not in point, the act being private, and the prayer itself ejaculatory. The case of Phinehas, and that of the seed of Israel," mentioned in the ninth chapter of Nehemiah, with a few others, are all susceptible of a construction comporting with our views, and fully sustained by the authority of the inspired volume. For if we examine the account given of the consecration of the temple in the first book of Kings, it is indeed said, that "Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord," and "all the congregation of Israel stood;" but then, this was only while he was pronouncing a blessing upon them, it being afterwards added, "that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the Lord, he arose from before the altar of the Lord, from KNEELING ON HIS KNEES with his hands spread up to heaven. And he stood, and blessed all the congregation of Israel with a loud voice."

There is besides, in the second book of Chronicles, a relation of the same transaction recorded in this manner: "And he stood before the altar of the Lord, in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands, (For Solomon had made a brazen scaffold, of five cubits long, and five cubits broad, and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court; and upon it he stood, and **KNEELED DOWN UPON HIS KNEES** before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven:)" So that this parallel passage clearly indicates, that the standing up, spoken of in Kings, was merely preserved while blessing the people; that it was either preparatory or subsequent to the more humble act of bowing down; it also clearly indicates, that we may give a similar interpretation to the expression in Nehemiah, "the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers:" particularly when it is said in the preceding chapter, "Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God: and all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands; and they **BOWED** their heads, and worshipped the Lord with their **FACES TO THE GROUND.**"

Recollect moreover, Brethren, the strong and emphatick declaration of God himself; "As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God." Recollect, that St. Paul uses this very expression, as synonymous with the lifting up of his voice in prayer; "For this cause I **BOW DOWN MY KNEES** unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." Recollect, that when the disciples of Tyre, with their wives and children, accompanied Paul and his companions out of the city, they all "kneeled down, and prayed." Recollect above all, that our blessed Saviour says; "When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray **STANDING** in the **SYNAGOGUES**, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be **SEEN** of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."

These surely are passages of some moment; and such, as will not follow, nor be led by them, might at least pursue another course, without affecting to look down with contempt upon our more scriptural practice, our alternate rising up to praise the Lord, and bow-

ing down to supplicate the blessings of his providence and grace. They accuse us of formality, of an exceeding fondness for ceremony and show. I will not retort the charges. They are unworthy of those, that wear the livery of Christ. I will not even pretend, that an upright posture is incompatible with "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man." I rather believe the reverse, and that this deviation from holy examples is by no means a fatal error. But at the same time, that it is generally, if not utterly, at variance with the scriptures has been sufficiently proved. After diligent examination, according to my understanding, with the exception of the hypocrites referred to and rebuked by our Saviour, I have not been able to discover a solitary undisputed example of standing up, during the celebration of publick worship. Kneeling, on the contrary, is every where to be met with. In allusion to this, Isaiah says, "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees:" The Psalmist, "My knees are weak through fasting:" The Apostle Paul, "Wherefore, lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;" The Lord Jehovah, in Ezekiel, "All hands shall be feeble, and all knees weak."

How much cause have we therefore, Brethren, to adhere strictly to this good old custom originally established by the will of God, and piously retained in the Christian Church, from the period of its foundation by Christ and his Apostles. A custom most likely to prevent the wandering of the sight and to suppress the roving of the thoughts. For when the whole person is exposed, and each individual assumes an attitude comporting with his own feelings, Is there not danger, lest the attention should be attracted to outward objects, to the entrance of such as either designedly or unavoidably delay their attendance, to the various circumstances of dress and parade, of concern and unconcern, of propriety and impropriety, which serve to distinguish the appearance and deportment of others? Alas! I fear we must all of us be free to acknowledge, that such danger is not so idle and visionary, as to require no antidote. We must all of us feel, that indecorum is not so seldom existing in our worshipping assemblies, as even to neutralize the necessity of guarding against it as efficiently as possible.

Why then should not Christians universally adopt the preventive counsels and practice of our holy Church? Especially since there is obviously more of humility than of pride in the pliant, bended

knee; more of composure and self-possession in the ludden and retired, than in the devious, rambling eye. God only knows. We must not judge, lest we be judged. We must leave every man to be fully persuaded in his own mind, and confine ourselves to the prayer, that whatever this persuasion be, it may contribute to accomplish the hearty desire of Paul, where he says; "I beseech you, therefore, Brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

There are however some other ceremonies observed in our public worship, which have for ages incurred the censure of our fellow Christians. My limits will compel me to notice them but briefly, although I trust, that the explanation and defence will be as satisfactory as brief. In repeating the Apostles' creed, it is objected, that we are accustomed to bow at the moment we express our belief in Jesus Christ our Lord. For what good reason, I have never been able to divine. His Father says, "Let all the angels of God worship him;" and again, "Unto the Son, he said, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." He was worshipped, by the Apostle Thomas, in the unqualified terms, "My Lord and my God." The great body of Christians do not hesitate to pay to him divine honours, and why this small tribute of our love and reverence should be denounced is most extraordinary. I can attribute it to nothing but an unreasonable prejudice, or to a captious dislike of every thing practised in the Roman Church. For me, it is enough, that the Apostle hath said; "At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Bowing and confessing would therefore seem to be most appropriately blended together in this part of our service, and long may we in this manner manifest our submission to an authority, that no man can justly condemn.

Another objection is urged against our kneeling, when we receive the elements of bread and wine, in the sacrament of the Lord's supper. But the answer is similar and equally pertinent. Those elements are administered and received with the use of these solemn words, slightly and from necessity altered from the original. "The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee;" and "The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee."

Who then shall refuse to bow at that blessed name? Who, that is "not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy table," O most merciful Lord, shall venture to brand our lowly posture with the semblance of idolatry? Let us pity, Brethren, the weakness of such persons. Let us forgive the uncharitableness of their imputation. But never, no never let us follow their example, by feeding upon those holy mysteries, sitting at our ease, and scorning the more humble and reverent attitude. A very accurate writer has remarked, "that the posture of sitting was first brought into the Church by the Arians; who stubbornly denying the divinity of our Saviour, thought it no robbery to be equal with him. and to sit down with him at his table." From the same Author. I also learn that "the pope" "always receives this sacrament sitting." So that in one particular, if no more, our seceding protestant brethren must refrain from the cry of superstition and popery; they, who prefer to copy after the solitary example of His Holiness, "rather than not differ from the best and purest Church in the world."

The use of the organ is another serious and insurmountable objection to the publick worship of the Church. David, the man after God's own heart, in the temple service, could listen to the ten-stringed instruments and other harps of solemn sound; and could compose hymns to be accompanied by their melody. The Almighty himself could then endure instrumental as well as vocal musick. He could tolerate the lyre, the sackbut, and the psaltery, the timbrel, the trumpet, and the organ in his house of prayer. But many of our modern Christian brethren are fain to think that a change has ensued in him, "with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning," and that what was once pleasing and acceptable has ceased to be gratifying to the divine ear.

Not that they can produce the slightest evidence in favour of their opinion; not that our Saviour drove away the musicians, with the moneychangers from the temple at Jerusalem; not that there is one word from him, from the Apostles, or primitive Christians authorizing them to proclaim war against instruments of musick in our Churches. No, no such thing. They can discover no such valid pleas against them. It is simply because the Catholicks continue their use, that they persist in banishing their melody from the house of God. In vain did this gracious Being admit them in his

solemn worship. In vain are they told by St. John, in the Apocalypse; "I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder; and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps." Not the divine appointment, not the practice of high heaven itself can control the prejudices of some of our dissenting brethren. They will neither with the organ praise the Lord themselves, nor can they find it in their hearts to think or to speak charitably of those who do. We must suffer them to act their own pleasure. For ourselves, we cannot but know, that the organ has a most valuable and solemn effect, whenever we are here "speaking to ourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord."

The only remaining objection, to which I shall direct your attention arises from the wearing of distinguishing garments by the clergy of the Church, during the celebration of divine service. And surely nothing but a most inveterate habit of discerning notes and beams, in the eyes of others, could have furnished our opposers with the shadow of a reason, against a practice so becoming in itself, and so fully sanctioned by the volume of inspiration. They cannot have forgotten what minute directions were given to Moses, in relation to the vestments to be worn by the Jewish priests; "And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, for glory and for beauty. And thou shalt speak unto all that are wise-hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office. And these are the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a broidered coat, a mitre, and a girdle." The succeeding details are too voluminous to repeat; but the dresses for the high priest, priests, and Levites are all described with the utmost minuteness, and evince beyond all doubt, that the Almighty is very far from disapproving the modest and appropriate attire, in which the ministers of his Church are at present clothed.

The surplice in particular cannot be offensive to Him, who is represented by Daniel, as habited in a "garment white as snow;" nor to our Saviour, whose "raiment," at the transfiguration, "was white as the light." In the Revelations, it is also apparent, that the Church herself is to be hereafter adorned with the same ap-

parel; "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine white linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."

To be perpetually upbraiding her ministers, for putting on the like simple and beautiful garments, betrays therefore but little respect for the wisdom of the heavenly bridegroom. It is reviling what God hath honoured, and his beloved Son approved. Addressing the angel of one of the seven Churches of Asia, he says, "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess him before my Father, and before his angels." And with such authority, such ample promises of reward to the faithful, the ministers of Christ need not care to bear the obloquy of men. The divine countenance is all sufficient to extract the sting, and blunt the edge of their foulest calumnies.

"What offence" said Jerome, "What offence can it be to God for a bishop or priest, &c. to proceed to the communion in a white garment?" An interrogatory, that clearly shows the custom of the primitive Church, and that should cause a blush to mantle the cheeks of those, who in declaiming against the external worship, the rites, ceremonies, and habiliments of our Zion, appear to be entirely ignorant of the fact, that they are alike opposing the institutions of God, the will of Christ, the judgment of his Apostles, and the faith and practice of the primitive Church.

I would not indeed set too high a value on the outward appearance, knowing that the Lord looketh on the heart, and thence determines the true character of every man's work, whether it be good or whether it be evil. But if the subjects discussed, and the usages defended in this discourse are altogether useless and unimportant; if corporeal worship and the mode of its performance cannot possibly become an acceptable sacrifice in the sight of heaven: Why was it, in one of the conflicts attending the journey through the wilderness: Why was it, "when Moses," in a supplicating posture, "held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand Amalek prevailed?" Why was it, when his

implored "hands were heavy," that Aaron and Hur "took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword?"

These, Brethren, are the words of scripture, they were written for our instruction, and if I am capable of comprehending their import, they do most indubitably prove, that the Almighty is to be obeyed in all things, however trivial and insignificant, they may appear, in the eyes of erring man; that he even suspends his blessings upon the external features of that obedience; and in the present instance only bestowed them, where bestowment was sought after in the way of his appointment. Permit me also to remark, that the whole transaction is far more open to the shafts of raillery, than any observances upon which I have this day insisted, as divinely ordained. And still, it was the counsel and the work of God, still shall no cunningly devised ridicule convince me, that the armies of Israel would have prevailed over those of Amalek, had not Moses, and Aaron, and Hur discharged their duty precisely as it was discharged.

The case of Naaman, the Syrian, is not less decidedly to the purpose. Directed by the prophet, for his cure, to "Go and wash in Jordan seven times;" he "was wroth and went away, and said, Behold I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?" But if he had not happily returned to a better mind, if he had not "dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God;" never would his flesh have "come again like unto the flesh of a little child," never would he have become "clean."

It is from such passages, that I obtain the principles, which regulate my conduct in relation to the Church of Christ. Show me what God hath established, and my faith is secured, my obedience is compelled: There is a voice from heaven ever whispering to my heart the doctrine it once sounded aloud in the ears of Peter, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." And these

are sentiments, which I wish to inculcate upon the minds of all. Wit and ridicule have no place in my creed. They are entirely irrelevant, when sported upon heavenly things. Let those, who differ in opinion with us; let those, who are prejudiced against our peculiar ceremonies, substitute argument for satire, and testimony for assertion; let them prove that they have proceeded from a corrupt source, and not from the unerring counsels of heaven; let them do this, and I will be as ready to adopt their system, as I am now zealous in maintaining what is conscientiously believed to be the truth divulged in holy oracles.

In the meantime, I shall go on my way rejoicing in the conviction, that our Church only requires to be generally known, in order to be generally embraced; and that the more her peculiarities are investigated, the more certainly it will appear, that she has her foundation upon the Rock of Ages. The morning of the next sabbath will be devoted to the subject of publick forms of prayer; and although I am sensible of the injurious light in which they are too often regarded, I shall proceed with the utmost confidence in maintaining their intrinsick value and scriptural origin. And may Almighty God, in the abundance of his goodness, grant me wisdom to examine, with power and effect, one of the most interesting features of our spiritual economy. May he enable me to contend successfully, as well as earnestly, for the faith once delivered to the saints; and to him, the Father, with the Son and Holy Ghost, shall be ascribed everlasting praises, world without end. AMEN

SERMON XI.

ISAIAH lxii 1.

For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

IN my last discourse, I attempted to vindicate the mode of conducting the visible publick worship of the Church, and flatter myself with the hope, that you must have perceived how admirably and how faithfully it coincides with the injunctions and examples exhibited in the scriptures. With many persons all these observances are regarded with the utmost contempt, not to say abhorrence. They revile them for what they ignorantly term their papal origin, and fondly imagine their own to be a far more simple and devout method of approaching the throne of grace, and paying their homage to the great Jehovah. Before the kings of this earth, the knee may be bent, but not before the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. It would be too formal, perhaps too servile and obsequious. It would savour too much of those sycophants, who fawn upon the persons of princes, and little coalesce with our sternly inflexible republican principles.

But embrace, Brethren, what doctrines you please in relation to this world and its political institutions, they must not come in competition with the higher concerns of religion. God will still continue to be King in Zion, and Lord of All; "his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation." In his presence, every high look should be cast down, and every stubborn knee be bent. It is more reverent, more humble, more expressive of the infinite disparity subsisting between the august Creator, and the poor worms of the dust, who feed upon his bounty, who respire the vital fluid, and enjoy all the good things of this life, by his permission alone.

I freely concede, that external ceremonies are not to be compared with the lifting up of the heart unto God in the heavens. I know

that our Saviour severely rebuked those pharisees, who paid tithes of all that they possessed, even of "mint and rue, and all manner of herbs." But recollect the cause. It was not, as some people would adroitly argue; it was not, that he condemned the extreme rigour with which they complied with the letter of the law. It was because they did not at the same time catch its spirit. It was because they exhausted all their obedience in the minor duty, and "passed over judgment and the love of God;" passed over "the weightier matters," and rigidly observed the lighter; when in his estimate of religious obligation, there should have been no omission of either; when to use his own emphatick language, "these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." Language that as broadly condemns the modern despiser, as it once did the ancient observer of little things. I am therefore for that golden mean, that truly safe and Christian course; which ventures not, on any pretence whatever, to set aside a single ceremony, institution, precept, or doctrine, which the divine wisdom hath ordained. I am for both outward and inward devotion. I am for cultivating the latter, in the precise dress and manner, in which the former was originally clothed and approved of heaven. When I come to appear before thee, O God, in the congregation of the righteous, may my knees be as prone, as my heart should be humble; may my prayers be the same with that beautiful and solemn liturgy, which has for ages survived the scorn of the scorner, and extorted the admiration of the wise and good.

With respect to prayer, it is indeed most astonishing, that a contrary practice was ever suffered to prevail among those, who call themselves, and many of whom doubtless are, the sincere disciples of Jesus. It is at variance with all scripture, with the counsels of Him, who heareth prayer, with the precedents furnished for our imitation by the prophets and the Jewish Church, by our blessed Saviour, the Apostles, and primitive Christians. For publick extemporary prayer in the house of God, I do not scruple to affirm, that there is not one syllable in justification from Genesis to Revelations. It is altogether of recent origin, and of human device. It is among that infinitely vast variety of new projects and new doctrines, which have come to light since the volume of inspiration has been closed, which have neither prophecy nor miracle to enforce their claim upon our observance, and that, however conformable to

human prejudice, will not for a single moment endure the test of truth and reason.

For what is the language of truth, of Almighty truth itself? "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few." Does this look like unpremeditated extemporaneous prayer? Does it sanction the clothing of those thoughts with unselected words, which rise up unadvisedly in the mind, which are the offspring of the moment, and are often known to convey ideas and principles, as unfit for God to hear, as for man to utter? Certainly, Brethren, if there be such an error, as being rash with the mouth, and hasty with the heart in uttering any thing before this majestick Being, it must be found among those, who disdain to resort to written forms; who boldly pronounce our book of Common Prayer a dead letter, entirely bereft of the life and soul of devotion; who are never too busily engaged in the cares of this world, or discomposed through human passion or human frailty, but that they can rush at a moment's warning into the dread presence of God, and pray as confidently, as if they had premeditated for hours, the most solemn performance, in which we are ever employed.

Not however to anticipate the remarks, which will hereafter become more appropriate; I design to examine, with all the brevity in my power, the testimony furnished by the scriptures in favour of our mode of conducting publick worship, in the use of precomposed forms of prayer. Did they really deserve the opprobrium, so frequently and so presumptuously cast upon them, it would seem very extraordinary, that the earliest act of publick devotion, commemorated by the inspired penmen, should be of this description. I allude to the anthem celebrating the deliverance of Israel from the hand of Pharoah, and commencing in this exulting strain, "I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and he has become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him." You will find the entire anthem in the fifteenth chapter of Exodus. You will there find, that it was first sung by Moses and the male population of Israel, and that Miriam the prophetess, and all the women immediately went out, "with timbrels and dances."

and "answered them" repeating the same words. Nothing then can be more evident than its precomposed character, that it was prepared beforehand for general use, and on this triumphant solemnity recited by the general voice.

Various other forms of devotion in the pentateuch also appear to have been divinely prescribed. I will instance but two of them. In the twenty first chapter of Deuteronomy, a prayer is provided, to be used after the entrance into the promised land in the case of secret homicide. "A heifer, which had not been wrought with, and which had not drawn in the yoke," was to be first sacrificed, "and the priests, the sons of Levi" were to "come near," "and all the elders of that city next unto the slain man," were to "wash their hands over the heifer;" they were to "answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it. Be merciful, O Lord, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel's charge." In the sixth chapter of Numbers, "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron, and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

Thus early then did the Almighty sanction the use of forms in publick worship. Thus early enjoin them upon the observation of the people, whom his own right hand had redeemed from the house of bondage. So far from being preferred, extemporaneous effusions are not so much as named, in that interesting period of Jewish history. All was form: All what is now perversely termed formality, and it was acceptable to God. It was pleasing and grateful to Him, who is now but too commonly supposed to turn away with loathing and abhorrence from similar acts of prayer and praise. In the expiation for murder, it is said, that "the blood shall be forgiven them." After the benediction, which he himself deigned to compose for Aaron and his sons, it is written, "And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them."

And how was it, Brethren, in the time of David? Was publick worship then celebrated in the premeditated or the unpremeditated form? Let the bible answer, and you will learn, that the Levites

were directed "to stand every morning to thank and praise the Lord, and likewise at even," "according to the order commanded unto them." Let the entire hymns of prayer, as well as of praise, principally composed by the sweet Psalmist of Israel, let them answer, and you will learn, that they constituted a material part of the temple service. On one occasion, David delivered a particular "psalm, to thank the Lord, into the hand of Asaph and his brethren;" a psalm containing this petition, "Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen, that we may give thanks to thy holy name, and glory in thy praise;" and when it was repeated, "all the people said, Amen, and praised the Lord."

Nor was this worship confined to that age alone. In the days of Hezekiah, and in the house of the Lord, "the king, and all that were present with him, bowed themselves, and worshipped. Moreover, Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the Lord with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer: and they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped." "So the service of the house of the Lord was set in order. And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people."

Long afterwards at the erection of the second temple, a similar worship prevailed. In the book of Ezra it is said; "When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David king of Israel. And they sang together by course, in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because he is good, for his mercy endureth forever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid."

And here let me reiterate the well known fact, that several of the psalms were composed in the language of prayer, and at the same time were offered up by all the congregation. In the eightieth, for example, we have this expression thrice repeated, "Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved." In one instance it is even followed by an invocation, that clearly shows its imploring character, and the union of priests and people

in divine worship; "O Lord God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?"

But lest a distinction should still be urged between psalms of praise, and petitions for mercy and forgiveness, lest it should be said, that while the former were precomposed, the latter were unpremeditated; in addition to the examples already produced, I will refer you to the prophet Joel, for a form of prayer, to be repeated in the temple, under these circumstances, "Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: Gather the people together, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts; let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet: Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and LET THEM SAY, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them." After which it is added, "Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people." "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered."

I will refer you to Hosea, for a yet more explicit declaration, in favour of forms of prayer, addressed to all the people; "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. TAKE WITH YOU WORDS, and turn to the Lord; say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Ashur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses; neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our Gods: For in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." Yes, Brethren, words were to be taken, words were actually given. And what were the blessings promised in return? "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon."

How obvious then to every man unperverted by prejudice, that the Almighty hath no such objection to precomposed forms of prayer, as is vainly imagined in these latter days. From the bottom of my heart I could wish that they, who on this account are perpetu-

ally calumniating the service of the Church, could present us with numerous examples of publick extemporary prayer from the records of the old testament. The difference of worship between us, so far as their authority was concerned, would then be circumscribed by the question of relative value or adaptation to the condition of man; it would cease to exhibit on the one side a flagrant departure from the original mode of serving God in his holy temple, and no longer prove a formidable obstacle to our being more closely united in the bonds of Christian fellowship and love. But alas, the thing is impossible, not one such example is to be found. Whoever publicly called upon the name of the Lord in the Jewish Church, was furnished with words communicated by inspiration from heaven. With these, he was to praise the Lord Most High, with these, invoke the throne of grace; with these, the incense of his soul, and the sacrifice of a broken and contrite spirit were to ascend up on high; and from their combined efficacy were to result all those benefits, which the Almighty, in the boundless extent of his mercy and benevolence, bestowed upon his ancient and peculiar people.

Let it however be distinctly understood, that if our blessed Saviour, in the course of his ministry, had either condemned the customary service of the temple, or had instituted another mode of drawing near to God, with a clean heart in full assurance of faith; let it be distinctly understood, that this condemnation and this mode would not have been in the slightest degree affected by the previous forms of devotion prescribed to the Jewish nation. They would have been superseded, as circumcision was superseded by baptism, and the passover by the supper of the Lord.

But here, it is very material to be borne in mind, that our divine Redeemer never suffered one word of censure to escape his lips, in relation to precomposed prayers. At the period of his advent, it is universally admitted, that the Jews possessed a national liturgy, and that it was repeated in the temple twice every day at the celebration of the morning and evening sacrifice. And so far was this from being considered a desecration of the courts of the Lord's house, that "when the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished," thither the virgin Mary repaired, with her first-born son, the infant Jesus, "to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons." There also it was, that Simeon

"came by the Spirit," "and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him." There it was, that "one Anna a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser," and "a widow of about fourscore and four years," resided, and "departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day."

And can you believe, if that temple had been profaned by its liturgy, that the purification service would have been submitted to, by the holy child Jesus, or that Simeon and Anna would have been so highly commended; the one, for being "just and devout;" the other, for "serving God with fastings and prayers?" Can you believe, that the Holy Spirit would have either carried the good old Israelite there, or suffered the prophetess to remain joining in and contaminated by the breath of unhallowed prayer? The idea is too absurd, too preposterous. All these events afford indisputable evidence, that God was well pleased with the devotional forms there employed, and if many of the priests and worshippers were "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," that he could still address them, in the language, once appropriated to their forefathers, "They have well said all that they have spoken. Oh, that there were such a heart in them."

But even on the supposition, that these inferences are not as fully warranted, as I am disposed to maintain; we all know, that when our Saviour had arrived at the years of maturity, and had commenced his ministry, he invariably frequented the Jewish synagogue; the synagogue, in which, no man will venture to deny, that publick prayers were celebrated after a written form. For its liturgy is still in existence. It was read three times in the course of every day, and began in this manner, "O God, let thy name be magnified and sanctified in the world, which thou hast created according to thy good pleasure. Let thy kingdom have dominion therein, let redemption flourish, and let the Messiah come speedily, that thy name may be glorified."

How then, if the contemners of our service are to be credited, and their mode is to be preferred, how are we to account for these frequent visits of Christ to the synagogue? Provided we are so cold and formal in our devotions, owing to their being previously prepared and understood, how especially are we to account for his neglect in not condemning a similar worship? He could readily re-

prove the Jews for every other offence. He could reckon up in order the long catalogue of their crimes; could call them hypocrites, whited sepulchres, and a generation of vipers; could, on observing their profanation, drive them out from his holy temple; but never, no never did he impute to them the slightest error for their constant daily use of publick forms of prayer. In his hearing, they were rehearsed in temple and in synagogue, but not one word betrayed his disapprobation. He never counselled his disciples against them. You have heard what he did say, "Thou shalt not be as the hypocrites; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues;" and how easy it would have been to have added, who love to use forms of prayer; but no such thing. He rather countenanced those forms by his presence, and is even supposed by many to have adopted them himself.

Nor is this opinion by any means improbable. For had he refused to participate in publick worship; had he appeared, when it was celebrated, without uniting his own with the devoutness of others; how eagerly would his adversaries have seized upon this circumstance to render him odious with the people; how promptly have denounced him, as an impious, prayerless sinner. But amid all the vile, detestable calumnies, with which they were fain to blacken his reputation, this charge was never suggested; and certainly the profound silence of so many, and such implacable accusers, upon a subject so important in itself, is no slight evidence of his having joined in the worship of both the synagogue and the temple.

Be this however as it may; he never objected to the written formularies observed in either. He never ascribed to them the inefficacy and want of spirituality, so loudly complained of in our devotional exercises. He never told them, in their lieu, to pray extemporaneously. So far from this, he did not hesitate to provide for his disciples a form of prayer, the most simple, beautiful, and comprehensive the world has ever seen. I need not repeat it. Of all the inspired writings, it is the most familiar to your ears. Long will it be recorded to the praise and glory of the Church, that it preserves a conspicuous place in all her numerous offices of devotion. Encouraged in using it, by the express command of its Author, she considers it as determining with unerring certainty the abstract question concerning liturgies. If they are inexpedient, if they are justly obnoxious

to the charge of formality, so is the prayer drawn up and recommended by our Saviour Christ. He must either have erred in judgment, in yielding to the wishes of his followers, or he must have intentionally laid them under an obligation fatally calculated to impair, if not destroy, the fervency of their petitions to the mercy seat. How strange ! How very strange ! that the modern expedient never entered into his mind, that he never intimated to them the paramount value of extemporaneous addresses.

But the subject is too solemn and sacred to venture upon the borders of irony. I will be very plain and candid. I will show, beyond the possibility of a reasonable doubt, that our blessed Saviour must have entertained very different views of publick unpremeditated prayer, from such as prevail among many of our dissenting brethren. Having laid aside all forms, as both idle and pernicious, it is well known, that they embrace every opportunity to improve what is termed the gift of prayer. In many parts of our country, there is scarcely an assembly of any description, which is not opened in this manner. Not only religious, but moral, literary, and humane societies; not only these, but occasions are selected peculiarly inappropriate. A regiment cannot meet, an election cannot be held, but the confusion, turmoil, and strife of the subsequent scenes must be preceded, by the supplications of a single individual, uttered in the name of a congregation, eagerly intent upon the amusement or the contention of the day, and never more unprepared to appear in the presence of a heart-searching God. But if our divine Lord intended, that his followers should pursue a course of this kind; Why did he forbear to give us an example? About to appear in far more important transactions; about to heal the sick, to restore the lame and impotent, the blind, and deaf, and dumb; about to cast out devils, and to raise the dead; Why did he not call upon his disciples to listen to the devout aspirations of his soul, and unite in presenting them before his Father in heaven?

Speaking after the manner of men, I should have thought the solemnity extremely judicious and proper; but the thoughts of Christ were not as our thoughts. He never said to his disciples on these, or any other occasional meetings, Let us pray. Often, as a preparatory exercise, he would retire by himself, and pour out his soul to God. At times, he would also lift up his eyes to heaven, and in some short personal ejaculation, invoke its blessing on the miracle

about to be performed; but a publick extemporary prayer in its present acceptation, he never made. I have carefully examined all the incidents of his eventful life, and there is not one to be found. The pathetick intercession, in the fifteenth chapter of St. John, does not form an exception. The personal pronoun, "I," is constantly employed, and like his other individual devotions, it was probably uttered in private, or else, in the mental form implied in this account, "And it came to pass, as he was ALONE praying, his disciples were with him."

And greatly am I supported in this interpretation, and in the general conclusion, by the terms adopted by his disciples in the application already adverted to. They could not but perceive the frequency, with which he retired from their presence. They could not but know the reason. "And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." The petition was immediately complied with, and the Lord's prayer was the result.

But now, I ask you, if such a request would have ever been preferred by them or either of them, provided they had been long accustomed to hear from his lips the language of prayer? The answer cannot be mistaken. That hearing alone would have furnished them with the most fitly chosen words, as the model for their devotions. There would have been no necessity for the reply, "When ye pray say, Our Father which art in heaven." and so forth. For when or where, in this age of unpremeditated publick addresses to God; when or where have you known the officiating minister to be solicited to teach his hearers to pray? He, who is perpetually instructing them by his own performances, and who would be very apt to consider the petition itself, an insidious attack upon his capacity to lead in the worship of the sanctuary. How variant then must be his practice, from the practice of Christ. How fairly may we presume, that this wonderful tact and volubility in publick prayer, so extensively witnessed in our age, was utterly unknown at the period, when the holy Jesus went about continually doing good; when from village to village, from city to city, he performed his marvellous acts, and preached the gospel of the kingdom.

And has he not in all things left us an example "to walk even as he walked?" Has not the Apostle directed us, "Let this mind be

in you, which was also in Christ Jesus?" What then are we to think of this extraordinary innovation and change? If he could approve, by his constant attendance, and scarcely to be questioned use, the precomposed liturgies of the temple and synagogue; What objection can any man rationally entertain to a similar mode of worship? If he could guard his disciples against being led astray, by long prayers, delivered by hypocrites at the corners of the streets, to be seen of men; Why should we bestow our admiration upon these novel and unscriptural exhibitions of human ingenuity? If such language as this, fell from his blessed lips, "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father, which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly;" Why cannot we be influenced, by an injunction enforced by his personal practice, rather than make our own thoughts and petitions the only medium and directory for the publick devotion of others?

I have already, Brethren, given you to understand, that it was my determination to be very direct and explicit, and this determination will be adhered to in the further prosecution of a subject not yet exhausted. But permit me to assure you, that I speak more in sorrow, than in anger, when the solemn convictions of duty compel me to raise my feeble voice against those innovations, whose tendency it is to sweep away the landmarks of the scriptures, and obscure the light of revealed truth. I will not impute intentional error to those, whose practices I cannot shrink from opposing, but certainly it is equally, and even more disastrous, than if it had been deliberately and wantonly embraced. May God therefore, of his infinite mercy, avert the increasing evils, which it threatens; may he heal the dissensions, which disturb the peace of Christendom, by ordering the steps of every man in the way he should go; and to Him, with the Son and Holy Ghost, shall be ascribed, in the Unity of an ever blessed Trinity, everlasting praises. AMEN.

SERMON XII.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

IT is not too much to assert, that the evidence, produced upon the last sabbath, was sufficient to convince all candid and unbiassed minds, that from the time of Moses to the period embraced by the ministry of Christ, all scripture is decidedly in favour of the use of forms of prayer in the publick worship of God. So worshipped the Hebrews in the wilderness. So worshipped the prophets, and the Church established at Jerusalem. So worshipped the Holy One of Israel, whose example, it might have been thought, would prove conclusive upon his followers; but against whom it has been left for modern Christians indirectly to prefer the charge of formality.

I must confess to you, that I can regard it in no other light. If we are formalists, simply because we are attached to forms of prayer, more especially to that form, which Christ himself recommended and even enjoined; so must this holy Being share the obloquy; so are we, in point of fact, defending him, when we are employed in exonerating ourselves from an unfounded aspersion. A consideration of itself sufficient to nerve our hearts, and imbolden our speech. We know who it was that "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt;" and was this endured in mere anticipation of his future advent? How much more should we be steadfast and unwavering in our imitation of him, who have been counselled by the words of his mouth, and directed by the purity and the holiness of his example. If men have nothing more substantial to allege to our prejudice; "Blessed are ye when" they "shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." Well may ye "rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven."

But I have said, that the Apostles were also accustomed to address the throne of mercy with precomposed prayers; and where is the person that can have the temerity to deny it? Even upon the supposition, that the bible was here entirely silent, their characters alone would furnish a species of evidence, which no art or ingenuity could possibly invalidate. For were they not eminently faithful, and eminently obedient? After the miracle of the resurrection had thoroughly convinced them of the divinity and sonship of Christ; were they ever known intentionally to violate his commands; to set up their own in opposition to his will; and justify themselves on the pretence of superiour wisdom and sagacity? The very inquiry, if seriously proposed, would be an insult to their memory and a libel upon their piety. We must cease to admire their holy boldness in the cause of Christ, we must cease to consider them his faithful ambassadors to the ends of the earth, the moment we admit, that they did not pray precisely as he directed them. If it was not hypocrisy, that induced them to ask, "Lord, teach us to pray;" if there was no paltering with words in the reply, "When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven," and the entertaining of such thoughts would be blasphemy; then is it most manifest, that the Apostles habituated themselves to this inspired manual of devotion; then would it require a miracle to convince me, that these holy men disregarded the express command of their Master. They, who could "count all things but loss for the excellency of his knowledge." They, who for him, and the propagation of his gospel, freely encountered all manner of perils by land and by sea. They, who hesitated not to seal with their blood, the testimony they bore to the truth of his doctrines. No, no, such men could not but do, as Christ required; they could not but pray, as he himself had exacted. Whoever for the sake of a party would gainsay it, would for that party gainsay every thing sacred, and every thing divine. Upon this consideration alone we may safely determine the true character of Apostolick prayer, that it was by a form, a form prescribed by the great Head of the Church, and imposing upon his chosen an obligation, equally coercive with the grand commission, to preach and baptize.

If however it should be imagined, that, in their more publick devotions, a greater latitude was permitted, not merely in relation to words, which no one denies, but even to precedent and principle;

so that they were authorized to make their own extemporary prayers, the leading worship of the sanctuary; To such an imagination, I have to object, that it is altogether gratuitous; that it is warranted by no permission given them by Christ; and by no fact appearing in the record of their ministry.

On the contrary, before his crucifixion, they had constantly attended him in his visits to the temple and the synagogue, in order to participate in its service; and after his ascension, those visits were so far from being interrupted, that they are continually referred to -- Peter and John, "for example, " went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour." And of this temple was it written, "My house shall be called the house of prayer?" At that very hour, were publick forms of devotion invariably rehearsed? You cannot possibly believe, that the Apostles neglected to join in them; that they were mute spectators of the scene, neither approving nor disapproving the service. The presumption would be more violent, than I am able to reconcile with their acknowledged piety on the one hand, or their matchless intrepidity on the other. Either those prayers were proper, and they piously united their own, with the voice of the multitude, or they were improper, and they boldly denounced them, as lifeless and insipid forms. But not one word of censure can we discover; not one syllable did the Apostles utter, in temple or in synagogue, to the prejudice of a precomposed liturgy; not one imputation was cast upon them by the Jews, for either discrediting their worship, or declining to adopt it for their own. The conclusion is therefore irresistible, that they both used and approved; that "Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer," with no such objection to prepared formularies, as many of our modern Christians consider unanswerably cogent and imperative.

Not however to confide entirely, upon what may be termed negative evidence, I proceed to the positive, and find myself at once replenished with incontestable proof, that the Apostles employed forms in their joint devotions. On their return to "Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, they went up into an upper room," and "all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with the brethren." And that, this "one accord" was not the mere assent of the mind, to petitions preferred by a single individual of their number, is obvious

from the circumstance, that in the fourth chapter of the Acts, two of the Apostles, and the company with them, are represented to have "lifted up their voice to God with one accord," in a prayer, which is there preserved within the compass of seven verses, and that must necessarily have been previously made known and explained to the whole assembly. So likewise in the case of Joseph and Matthias, the Apostles, with one hundred and twenty disciples, "prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and Apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place."

How plainly then does the record disclose, by the introduction of these forms, what reason itself would teach, that they were enabled to lift up their voices simultaneously, owing to the fact of their having premeditated prayers to offer. Upon no other principle can we account for the vocal union, unless we resort to the immediate interference of the Spirit, and then it would only enhance the value of the authority in favour of forms. It would only prove, that upon sudden and unprepared emergencies, they were miraculously furnished by the intervention of the Almighty himself.

There is besides a remarkable difference in the account given by the inspired writer, between the praying and the preaching of the Apostles, which strongly confirms the doctrine I am endeavouring to maintain. When they with other Christians assembled for devotional exercises the plural pronoun invariably appears. It is not said that Peter, or James, or John, or either of their brethren lifted up HIS voice and prayed in the name of all. But the language is, "they prayed;" "these all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication;" "they lifted up THEIR voice to God with one accord." The moment however that preaching commenced, the style is changed, and "Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up HIS voice and said." On another occasion, "when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?" And so of every other recorded sermon, no matter how many Apostles were present, one only is reported to have addressed it to the people, or the narrative is so constructed, as to make it evident, that they never united their voices in the delivery of a long protracted discourse.

The distinction is still more to the purpose, when the ease of the disciples or congregation of believers is embraced. For they did not simply listen to prayers; "they lifted up their voice to God with one accord." But at the same time, they listened to preaching. And why? What reason can be assigned for this diversity? Surely, Brethren, ye can be at no loss to anticipate the only fair construction. Prayers were previously known, and therefore they could join in them, with voice as well as with heart. Sermons were unknown, were delivered for their instruction, and therefore they could only receive them into honest and good hearts, that they might bring forth fruit unto holiness.

Let me also advert to another circumstance peculiarly impressive. Often is it mentioned, that, when the Apostles and disciples were together, they united in publick devotion. But when Paul was at Athens, and "certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks encountered him," he could stand up in the midst of Mars hill, and pronounce the well known discourse, opening in this manner, "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious." And still, there was no prayer, no asking of the assembly to worship God. If Paul had been accustomed to the extemporaneous kind, he could certainly have prayed for them, and they could and would have listened, as they did listen to his preaching. But there were no believers among them, they knew not how to call upon God, and for this reason he refrained from prayer; it would not have been publick worship; extemporary effusions were not then in vogue; and neither at this place, nor at any other, does he appear to have audibly prayed, unless there were some in the congregation, who were antecedently prepared to mingle their voices with his own.

Tell me not then, that the Apostles were averse to precomposed forms. If their practice had been similar to that of many of our modern missionaries, they would have always commenced their religious solemnities with prayer, whether it was known to the congregation or not, whether they had fellow worshippers or not.

I know very well the tenour of the argument advanced by our opponents. I have repeatedly heard it pronounced, with an air of triumph and exultation, worthy of a better cause, worthy of something more candid and ingenuous. It is this. Do you think, that the Apostles prayed with a book? Do you think, that, when Paul

knelt down, with the disciples, upon the sea shore at Tyre, and prayed, he held a book in his hand?

I confess indeed, that the objection is conclusive and unanswerable, with such as will neither investigate nor determine for themselves. But to those, who prefer reason to ridicule, the inquiries will be far more to the purpose, Did not the Apostles possess the faculty of memory? Could they not, as easily as ourselves, repeat from memory, the prayer of our Lord? We know that they did repeat it, and if the subject was not too serious, we might retort upon our dissenting brethren; Do you think, that the Apostles rehearsed it from a book? Do you think that as often as he used it, St. Paul held a book in his hand?

The truth is, that the argument is entirely unworthy of Christians. In the modern acceptation, there were no books at that time. Until long centuries after, the art of printing was unknown. Manuscripts alone were employed. The volume of inspiration itself was termed the scripture or the scriptures. And did not Christ require his disciples to "search the scriptures?" Did they not conform to the injunction, and address it to others? Did not Philip read from the scripture, in his interview with the eunuch, although he was before perfectly acquainted with its contents?

And precisely thus with liturgies. They also were written out, and set in order. They occupied a place in the Jewish temple and synagogues. The devotional psalms of David, whether of prayer or of praise, it will not be denied, were therein daily rehearsed, and not unseldom in the presence of Christ, and his disciples. Why then all this contumely, this contemptuous sneering at books, now so easily obtained, and so admirably adapted to the uses of publick worship? Why in particular, are not the questions triumphantly asked? Do you think that the Apostles sang from a hymn book? Do you think, that, "at midnight, when Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God," they held hymn books in their hands?

But enough of an objection more plausible than wise, more calculated to delude than to instruct. While printed psalms and hymns are to be found in the seceding Churches, while they are mostly constructed in the language of supplication, opposition from that quarter, to our book of common prayer, comes with an ill grace, and is chiefly remarkable for the inconsistency betrayed by the individuals, who raise it.

The only remaining testimony, to which I have to call your attention upon the subject before us, is the practice of the primitive Christians. During the lives of the Apostles, they of course conformed to their example, as has been already sufficiently proved, and ever after, there was no departure from the principle divinely established. They used the prayer of our Lord. From a large number of authorities in my possession, I will present you with a few from the most distinguished Authors. Tertullian says, "The Son taught us to pray, Our Father, which art in heaven." He does not apprehend himself liable to the charge of formality, when he asserts, "Our Lord gave his new disciples of the new testament, a new FORM of prayer;" nor especially, when he terms it, "The prayer appointed by law," and "the ordinary prayer, which is to be said before our other prayers; and upon which, as a foundation, our other prayers are to be built." Cyprian observes, "Christ himself gave us a form of prayer, and commanded us to use it; because when we speak to the Father in the Son's words, we shall be more easily heard." But no one has expressed himself more explicitly and emphatically, than the pious and venerable Augustin, universally esteemed by catholick and protestant. Speaking of the Lord's prayer, these are his words, "Our Saviour gave it to the Apostles, to the intent that they should use it; he taught it his disciples himself, and by them he taught it us; he dictated it to us, as a lawyer would put words in his client's mouth," and again "it is necessary for all." He even declares in the most solemn manner, that "we cannot be God's children unless we use it."

So true it is therefore, Brethren, that the primitive Christians recognised this inspired form, as having been the foundation and guide, the manual of Apostolick devotion, and that they also regarded it as peremptorily enjoined upon their personal adoption. And this not merely in private, but in publick worship, for which the words of the prayer are indeed most suitable; it being drawn up in the plural number, and so, designed to be uttered, where two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ.

Consider then, that, if they are thus clearly and indisputably proved to have repeated one form, in the course of their publick service, no objection would be likely to exist against the rehearsal of another and another: that the approbation of their Lord, being

fully ascertained in one instance, they would not be slow to believe it a sufficient warrant and pattern, or as Tertullian calls it, a foundation for their other prayers. Accordingly we find, from the unanimous testimony of all antiquity, that they were not more addicted to "singing and making melody in" their "hearts to the Lord," with precomposed "psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs," than they were to supplicating his mercy and forgiveness, his grace and heavenly benediction, with precomposed prayers. He who could doubt this, might as well doubt, that there were such men as Justin Martyr and Origen, the former of whom speaks of "Common Prayer," and the latter of "constituted prayers;" might as well doubt, that Cyril was bishop of Jerusalem, at the middle of the fourth century, and contend that he never made a commentary upon the liturgy ascribed to the Apostle James, when that commentary is still extant, and Jerome assures us, that he wrote it in his younger years.

My limits will only permit me to add, that many liturgies were early composed, and introduced into the primitive Church. Some of them were attributed to the Apostles, as those of Peter, and James, and one to the evangelist Mark. Others were anonymous, as those of Rome and Alexandria, and others were known to have been written by Basil, Chrysostom, and Ambrose. There is indeed no one fact in ecclesiastical history susceptible of stronger proof, than the universal prevalence of precomposed forms of prayer from the earliest times. No other publick worship obtained. No other has been alluded to, by the writers, who flourished in the first centuries of the Christian era. And are we accustomed to pronounce them, the best and purest ages of the Church, the ages most distinguished for heartfelt piety, for holy obedience, and unaffected renunciation of the world, and the fashion thereof? How justly may we infer, that those prayers, instead of being gradually introduced to the exclusion of such, as were unpremeditated and extemporary; that those prayers were in strict accordance with the worship observed by the Apostles, and therefore sanctioned by the unerring wisdom of God.

It is also worthy of remark, that the ancient Syrian Church discovered in India by Dr. Buchanan, and which, you will remember, had no intercourse with the western Christians, for thirteen hundred years from the Apostolick age, was utterly ignorant of ex-

temporary prayers, and possessed a liturgy, believed by its bishop, to have been coeval with its origin. "Here," says the missionary, "as in all Churches in a state of decline, there is too much formality in the worship. But they have the bible and a scriptural liturgy; and these will save a Church in the worst of times."

We may indeed challenge our opponents to produce one single instance of publick worship, celebrated in a different manner, antierior to the reformation in Germany and Switzerland. By whom extemporary prayers were there introduced, I am unable to determine. It was not by the reformer Calvin, for in a letter to the Duke of Somerset, Lord Protector of England, written in the year fifteen hundred and forty nine, he was evidently opposed to such an innovation, and says, "I do highly approve, that there should be a certain form of prayer and ecclesiastical rites. From which it should not be lawful for the pastors themselves to discede.—First, That provision may be made for some people's ignorance and unskilfulness.—Second, That the consent of all Churches amongst themselves may the more plainly appear.—Third, That order may be taken against the desultory levity of such, who delight in innovations.—Thus there ought to be an established catechism, an established administration of sacraments, (*publicam item precum formulam*) as also **A PUBLICK FORM OF PRAYER.**"

The old historian Fuller inserts the original words, with the remark, that they "deserve our translation and observation," and I know not that Calvin ever varied his sentiments. They are such as do credit to his judgment and sagacity, and if widely circulated might possibly relieve us from much of the odium, so profusely lavished upon our service, by the very description of innovators, whom he so freely condemns."

The origin of extemporary prayers in England is better understood. They were contrived by popish emissaries disguised in the garb of protestantism, and pretending the utmost abhorrence of what they stigmatized, as the corruptions of popery still existing in the English Church. The object was to produce division and dissension, as the surest mode of bringing the reformed religion into disrepute, and regaining the ascendancy once enjoyed by the Roman pontiff. For this purpose among other things, they were loud in their invectives against the liturgy; they vilified it, as a new edition of the mass book, and insisted upon its being wholly abandon-

ed, by such as were desirous of praying under the immediate influence of the Spirit of God.

Unhappily they were but too successful in their efforts. They impaired the unity, although they could not destroy the existence of the true Church of God. Numbers were attracted by the fluency and apparent devotion, with which these new-fangled prayers were uttered; they did not hesitate to ascribe them to the direct agency of the Holy Spirit; and soon began to manifest a dislike to the service of the Church, which finally terminated in irreconcilable hatred and disgust.

Delighted with the success of their first enterprise, England was destined to be thoroughly inundated with these counterfeit reformers, they penetrated through all parts of the country; and wherever they appeared new sects sprung up with mushroom precocity, differing widely on many doctrinal points, and conspiring in nothing else but a determination to eradicate the artfully assumed relics of popery. Against all forms of devotion they were particularly exasperated, and would by no means tolerate their feigned mummery. Extemporaneous prayer was the nucleus round which these incongruous materials could gather with one accord. And such was its origin in the land of our ancestors. A few of its abettors were discovered, as Cumming, Heth, and others; their real character was ascertained; their disguised protestantism proved; and their actual devotion to papacy unmasked. But the larger number escaped, they sowed the seeds of innumerable heresies and schisms, and persuaded their deluded followers, that they and they only were the salt of the earth, and the light of the world.

But no longer to dwell upon a subject so painful in the retrospect, and yet, as it is to be feared so little calculated to conciliate the wanderer, and bring him back to the fold from which he has strayed; I prefer to congratulate you, upon the distinguished honour we enjoy, through adherence to those precomposed forms of worship, in whose favour such a cloud of witnesses has been adduced. And who I ask is best entitled to determine the manner in which the Supreme Being is to be worshipped? Is it the Creator himself, or the man he has formed? The object to be adored, or the person required to adore? The Infinite and Omniscient, who can alone comprehend his own glory, or the finite and ignorant, from whom its brightest effulgence is veiled by interposing clouds and dark-

ness? The far searching Spirit, who can read the inmost thoughts of the heart; who can detect at a glance its wandering affections, and alone recall and fasten them upon his matchless perfections, or the purblind, wretched mortal, that is often at a loss to fathom his own spirit, that knows nothing as he ought to know it, and that left to himself is emphatically the spoiled child of vanity and self delusion? Who I repeat is best entitled to determine?

Most clearly, Brethren, there can be no room for hesitancy in the reply. Nor ought there to be any in the alacrity, with which obedience should be rendered. When God speaks, it is not for man to raise his feeble voice and puny strength in opposition. It is for him to bow the soul and bend the will, to extinguish self and pluck out the evil heart of unbelief. And that he has spoken, plainly and directly spoken, is as evident as the day, and as clear as the sun in the heavens. On no other principle would Moses, in the old testament, have prepared his song of triumph, and recorded his inspired prayers for deliverance; would David have indited his psalmody, and joined it to the spirit stirring worship of Israel. On no other principle would Jesus, in the new, have embodied his form of prayer; would the Apostles and primitive Christians have treasured it up in the greenest spot of their remembrance. But all these things, as Paul says upon a different theme, "All these things" have "happened unto" us "for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." If we have a right to depart from them, by substituting a novel and unpremeditated mode of worshipping God; we are equally at liberty to follow our own fancy, in rejecting all the remaining rites and institutions of the gospel; we are bound by nothing but our own pleasure, and even this may vibrate backwards and forwards, as policy serves, and capricious humours predominate. One while inclining us to follow after, and at another to vary from the example of Christ.

But if this doctrine be false, this irresponsible state be the creature of our own imagination, if baptism for instance be binding, and the supper of the Lord binding; so in publick worship must forms of prayer be construed with the same rigour, and exact the same obedience. The expressions, "Repent and be baptized," "Do this

in remembrance of me," are no more peremptory than, "When ye pray say."

I can neither understand nor approve the nice distinctions so often attempted to be drawn. There is even prevailing with many Christians an evident anxiety to ascertain, how far a person may venture to dissent from the counsels of God, without involving the soul in everlasting ruin. It is not meant, that they make this a question, under the conviction of having already been guilty of such dissent. But amid numerous conflicting opinions, they have acquired the habit of resting satisfied with their own, not upon the principle of its being clearly warranted by the scriptures; but because without troubling themselves to make a diligent and laborious investigation, they have settled the matter in their own minds, that if they are wrong, the deviation must be too trifling and unimportant to affect their future interests.

Nothing therefore is more common, than the idea of there being different routes to heaven. Nothing is deemed more uncharitable, than to insinuate, that an unbaptized adult, or a non-communicating adult is placed in an imminently perilous and critical condition; although the language of the bible is, "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;" and again, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood ye have no life in you."

But for my own part, Brethren, I am decidedly opposed to this summary species of casuistry, this unscriptural method of disposing of cases of conscience, and of opening several doors and avenues to heaven; when there is but one strait gate and one narrow way. They may accord with the divinity of the times; but they do not accord with the divinity of the bible, and therefore they are not to my mind; therefore although my own judgment makes every allowance for modal errors in others, and my convictions are, that many of the unbaptized and non-communicating will hereafter be found among the saints of the Most High; yet would I not recommend any to confide in that judgment, or to trust in those convictions. My doctrine and advice are rather of this nature; "Hear the word of the Lord;" "Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest" the holy scriptures. They are able to make you wise unto salvation, and if ye will but adopt this course, neither turning to the right hand nor to the left, with the view of indulging in what

are called trivial errors, neither making flesh your arm nor designedly suffering your hearts to depart in one single particular from the Lord; if ye will do this, ye cannot fail of making your calling and election sure.

With such dispositions, such intense anxiety to be found blameless in all things, such pious and determined resolutions to stand perfect and complete in all the will of God; if ye be not saved, I know not who will. There may be errors, but they will be errors of the judgment and not of the heart. And for these, no Christian, let him belong to Greek or Roman Church, to our own or any denomination confessing the fundamental doctrines of the cross, will be liable to endure the severity of God's displeasure. I speak with confidence, because I have exacted all that God exacts. I have required of every man to be fully and deliberately, and not capriciously and hastily persuaded in his own mind. And may our heavenly Father, in the multitude of his mercies, bring all these things to pass, with us his dependant creatures; may we truly love and honour, and rightly worship and serve him; may our heads be wise, our hearts pure, our consciences without offence, and our immortal souls duly prepared to enter into the embraces of his everlasting love; and to Him, with the Son and Holy Ghost, three persons and one God, shall be ascribed all praise, and glory, and dominion, and power, world without end. AMEN.



SERMON XIII.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

IN the remarks hitherto made upon the subject of publick forms of prayer, I have almost exclusively confined myself to their vindication upon the ground of authority. I have shown you, what

the scriptures have said, what prophets and Apostles, with Christ our Saviour have practised, what primitive Christians and their successors to the sixteenth century were unanimous in adopting, with all the ardour of sincere devotion, and all the obedience of triumphant faith. My own opinion is, that in all such cases, we are to submit our own judgment unreservedly to the clear intimations of the sacred volume. We are to exercise our reason in searching them out, but having made the discovery, reason must bow with reverence to the teachings of the holy Spirit. No improvements are to be suggested, no changes are to be advised or attempted. What was true in Christianity eighteen hundred years ago is true at this moment. What mode of worship was then best adapted to propitiate the mercy and favour of God, still maintains the pre-eminence, and is not to be rejected in deference to the inventions of men, or in subserviency to the maxims of worldly popularity.

I am not for having the gospel and its institutions veered about to every point of the compass, just as the breath of the multitude inclines, and as it may be found in human apprehension expedient to yield to their caprice, and harmonize with their perpetually varying prejudices. But what say the scriptures? What examples are by them recorded for our instruction? These are questions which weigh with me infinitely more than the prepossessions of my fellow men. I will honour and respect their opinions on all other subjects, but when they come in contact with the words of truth and soberness, the voice of God is with me of incalculably greater value and authority, than the voice of the people. They may extol extemporaneous publick prayers. An imposing majority of their number in this western world may be decidedly in their favour, but so long as the bible refuses to give them the slightest countenance, I will prefer the Church, that orders her worship in accordance with the bible; I will believe, that precomposed forms of prayer are far better calculated to preserve the excellency and the beauty of holiness.

For what is the object of publick worship? Is it to hear another praise the Lord? To hear him confess, that universal man is guilty in the sight of heaven, and in absolute need of the quickening influence of converting and sustaining grace? To hear him invoke the divine blessing, and confide in the fervency of his intercessions alone? Is it to admire the fluency of his delivery, the copiousness

of his rhetorick, the graceful ease and measured cadence of his periods? If this be publick worship, I readily subscribe to the superiority of that system, which authorizes one to pray for all, and that affords him so admirable an opportunity to build up a reputation for shining talents and eloquent appeals to God.

With our venerable formularies, we can make no such pretensions, nor attract the eulogy of one applauding tongue. But if it be publick worship for all hearts and lips to praise and pray, to lift up the voice with one accord, and either shout hosannas, or implore the remission of unnumbered sins; then must that form of sound words be greatly preferable, which all may understand, and in which all may cordially unite. We can come together, conscious of what we are about to utter, and depending on no one to select the language appropriate to the condition and feelings of the bleeding heart. There is no weighing of petitions before they can be personally employed, no tax upon the understanding to determine whether they be right or wrong; no effort of the mind to keep pace with the affections in their projected flight to the throne of grace. On the part of the devout Christian already have the words been carefully perused, and the petitions deliberately approved. The soul is therefore at liberty to concentrate all its powers in elevating the heart to Him, who requires its liveliest devotion; the heart, without which all our prayers are vain, and all our expectations of divine favour excessively idle and presumptuous.

I am aware indeed of the vulgar error. I know how generally the opinion prevails, that unpremeditated effusions are alone cordial and sincere. But with what propriety, it would require a wise head than mine to comprehend, whether it applies to the speaker or the hearer: The speaker, whose mind must necessarily be in some measure employed in the conception of thoughts and the choice of words: The hearer, who before he can unite must rapidly perform five distinct intellectual acts. He must first hear, then understand, then judge, then approve, and then pray.

Whereas in forms of prayer, the affections are left free and unembarrassed. They are not disturbed or neutralized by the simultaneous inventions and operations of the head. They can rise on strong, elastick wing, and play, as it were, around the throne of mercy. There is no such hinderance upon the emotions of love and gratitude, but they may be there: none upon desire and admiration.

but they may be riveted with intense and eager delight upon the divine perfections. Let men therefore indulge what fancies they please, to me it is evident, that if they have no heart to pray with such words as the Holy Ghost teaches, they can have none to lift up to God with words of their own.

Here also, Brethren, it will be proper to remind you of another and a very important advantage resulting from the use of forms of prayer. They are more likely to ensure the union of all hearts in publick worship. Nothing indeed can effect this, where there is no previous inclination or desire to praise and pray. But among those, who for these purposes appear in the courts of the Lord's house, it is not to be denied, that a perfect knowledge of the language and sentiments to be addressed to God peculiarly promotes the harmony of feeling, so desirable in devotions professing to be general and united.

Under such circumstances, no one has cause to fear lest the officiating minister should employ ill chosen words, or prefer improper petitions; lest he should express himself with irreverent familiarity, or indulge in offensive doctrinal points, or even give way to personal resentments and antipathies. By precomposed liturgies, all these things are avoided. The aspirations of the devout worshipper are neither perplexed, nor entirely defeated. Whatever he may think of the sermon, however he may lament its errors and deficiencies, on retiring to his home, he can at least please himself with these reflections; I have this day offered appropriate homage to the God that made me, and whom I am bound to serve; I have praised and magnified the Lord; I have thanked him for his numerous blessings; at his footstool, I have publicly confessed my sins, and acknowledged the imperfection attending my best services; I have implored their pardon and forgiveness; I have sought for new and more copious streams of grace; I have disposed my spirit for their reception, by the excellency of my words, and the sincerity and earnestness with which they have been pronounced.

But when extemporary prayers are offered, if they really constitute publick worship, how often have the congregation been compelled to pray in terms, as foreign to their intentions as diametrically opposed to the character of true devotion. How often have expressions been put in their mouths, which their souls have utterly loathed and abhorred. How often have they been made to adopt

all the strange fancies and heterodox sentiments of some wild enthusiast, craving of God, as blessings, what they would prefer to deprecate, as curses. How often been obliged to yield a publick assent to all the enmities of their leader, and to be dragged before the throne of love using prayers imbittered by malice and defiled with imprecations. How often been represented through one organ of devotion soliciting, or returning thanks for, the precise gifts, from which another is soon destined to make them implore deliverance.

Yes, Brethren, these are incidents by no means uncommon, particularly in seasons of strong excitement, whether religious or political. Ministers are men of like passions with yourselves, and when left to their own discretion, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak, causing the hearer, in the house of God, to appear before him, thinking as they think, and praying as they pray. So far from these remarks being the creation of fancy, repeatedly have I heard the Christian denouncing the prayer of his pastor; at one time lamenting its impropriety, and at another shocked by its asperity. And all this, without imagining it to have been his own prayer, the prayer which he countenanced by his presence, and in which he publickly professed to unite, by rising up in the attitude of devotion. But let me tell him, it either was his own, and that of the congregation, who ostensibly gave it their assent, or else the principal object for which they were assembled, the object of joining in the publick worship of God, was completely frustrated. And is that mode of conducting the service to be preferred by believers in Christ, which exposes them to this predicament; which makes them for the time passive instruments in the mouth of one man; and to the eye at least fervently engaged in petitions which from their very souls they detest?

Not such were the prayers, which the Apostles and primitive Christians used with one accord. No such obstacles impeded the lifting up of their united voices, and wherever they do exist, wherever the fault, instead of being chargeable to the heart, is to be attributed to the unwarrantable collocation of words and ideas, then does publick worship in that instance become a solemn farce, a presumptuous trifling with Almighty God; with Him, who requires us not to be rash with our mouths, nor hasty in uttering any thing before him. And yet, we are not afraid of regularly placing ourselves in a situa-

mon, where we are liable to be rash with the mouth, and hasty with the heart of another, over whom we have no control, and whose most glaring extravagancies are sanctioned by our seeming acquiescence.

I know not, Brethren, how these things may affect your minds; but of this I am sure, that while our forms of worship are perfectly pure and unobjectionable, and nothing is demanded to make them acceptable unto God, but a true state of the heart and its affections; it is beyond all doubt, that the pious and godly among our dissenting brethren are frequently made to pray, as opposite to their real intentions as light is opposite to darkness; made to prefer petitions at different times, flagrantly inconsistent the one with the other, petitions which no finite being could possibly reconcile with sincere devotion, and which the Infinite alone has wisdom sufficient to separate, and either accept or reject, as they would have them accepted or rejected.

And here I am naturally led by the subject to advert to a consideration rarely or never permitted to occupy the minds of our fellow Christians. They can declaim with wonderful facility against our forms of prayer, and however compelled to acknowledge the excellency of their spirit, can loudly condemn the supposed corruption, which must attend upon their practice; but at the same time, how lamentably ignorant, do they appear to be, that if their objections and reproaches are just, they themselves are in a tenfold greater degree the subjects of corruption. For when you come to analyze their prayers, what are they in reality but FORMS? With the speaker they may be unpremeditated, and conceived at the moment; but what have the congregation to do with them before they escape his lips? What part of them is to be imputed to their immediate conceptions? They cannot speak with his mouth, much less can they in a state of silence transfer their thoughts to his mind. And the consequence is, that, so far as they are concerned, a form is imposed upon their observance, from which there is no appeal, and with which they must pray, or else entirely refrain from their incumbent duty.

If there be any error in this statement, I have not the capacity to detect it. In order for the prayers of any assembly to be truly extemporaneous, they must necessarily spring up in the mind, and be uttered by the voice of each individual worshipper. Prayers, composed of words that are spoken, are no less forms to such as use

them after their delivery, than are prayers previously drawn up and committed to the press; while the disadvantages attending them are infinitely greater than those imagined to exist with our own. There is no time allowed to judge of them with deliberation and care, no time to detect their slight, and none to object to their weighty errors. But precisely as spoken are they prescribed upon all who hear. The very men, who would not sign an important publick address to an earthly ruler, without carefully perusing its contents, have no conscientious scruples in permitting themselves to be included in an equally publick and far more important address to the sovereign Ruler of heaven and earth, without being apprized of a single sentence designed to be employed.

Can this be right? Are they who follow such sudden, evanescent, and often ungracious forms, justified in turning to ridicule, and proclaiming as corrupt, formularies of devotion that have stood the test of ages, and commanded the admiration of the world? Are they moreover to be branded as formalists, who come into the dread presence of God with a clear understanding of every word they are about to utter; who have cautiously examined every petition, and been able to discover nothing but what their heads approve, and their hearts are desirous to adopt? I can never subscribe to such sentiments. However popular, they savour too much of the wisdom of this world, and are in no little danger of being regarded as foolishness with God. Others may worship him, with forms of which they have no knowledge; but for me I will adhere to those, which are as familiar to my mind, as is the nature of the spiritual wants they were intended to supply.

Nor, in arriving at this determination, have I overlooked another, and a very material reason. Precomposed forms of prayer harmonize with precomposed forms of praise. Both were used in the Jewish temple and synagogue, and in addition to what has been elsewhere suggested, we may be confident, that both were directed to be transferred to the Christian Church from the well known declaration of Paul, "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also. I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." A declaration, that clearly ascertains the two prominent qualifications of publick prayer and praise. The first, that they must come warm from the heart, and the second, that they must be clothed with words, upon which the mind has been enabled to exercise its judgment.

No difference whatever between the two kinds of devotion has been intimated by the Apostle. The expressions applied to the one, are as emphatically applied to the other. And are we obliged to use forms in singing the high praises of our God? Is this of invincible necessity, inasmuch as the Spirit refuses the gift of extemporaneous metre? And do our opponents admit in principle and in practice, that it is far from impossible to conduct this part of divine worship in an acceptable manner, notwithstanding its precomposed character? How extremely preposterous to make a distinction where Paul hath made none. How strangely inconsistent to cavil at written forms of prayer, when they profess to be almost divinely inspired, as with prepared hymns, they are found combining their voices in melodious praise. Surely if God leathes a form in the one case, he must loathe it in the other. On the contrary, if he has made it absolutely indispensable in singing, he cannot but prefer it in praying with the Spirit. I can perceive no one plausible ground for the variance, and am constrained to believe, that were it practicable for a congregation to sing extempore, we should soon find, that the spiritual songs already composed would be discarded by the various sectaries with disgust, and condemned as imposing too great a restraint upon a free spirit, and as fit only to be recited by the lukewarm and indifferent.

Such we know to be the language unhesitatingly applied to our prayers, and it would be the same with our psalms and hymns. They only escape because their nature is incorrigible; they will not endure the metamorphosis, which has been fastened upon the kindred office of devotion; and therefore if the example of Paul is rejected in prayer, he is from necessity, it is to be feared rather than choice, permitted to be imitated in singing with the spirit, and with the understanding.

Recollect also that our fellow Christians can readily tune their voices with their hearts to sing repeatedly the same devotional hymn. They do not on this account imagine it to be the less pleasing to the divine ear, nor do they rack their inventions to come before him with an ever varied song of praise. But the moment their attention is turned to prayer, then indeed is the same stated form most violently assailed, then does it become intolerably lifeless and dull to pray sabbath after sabbath, with no other change than that supplied by a few collects adapted to the course of the ecclesiastical year.

I cannot learn that the disciples of Christ were thus grievously offended, when directed by him to lift up their hearts day by day to their Father in heaven according to a certain form, although that form was extremely comprehensive and brief. But in the opinion of many, the favour of the Almighty at this period materially depends upon the dexterity, with which it can be invoked with ever new and changing prayers. No matter if the spiritual necessities of the people are always the same. No matter if God has declared, that he is apprized of them, before they are sought to be relieved: still our devotions must be mutable, or they can never avail with Him, who is immutable; still there is such a wide distinction between hymns and prayers, that while the former may be successfully repeated every day of our lives, the repetition of the latter is offensive and odious; they must be new every morning.

And here I must confess to you, that if the immaculate Jehovah were precisely such a being as is described, so easily caught by the rhetoric of words, and pleased with novelty, it would indeed ensure our condemnation, in the day of judgment, should we persist in our established mode of worship. Far better would it be to discard it at the instance of our wiser brethren, and conform to their standard, although it were even more variable than the wind. Only, we should seek to improve it, by constantly changing our hymns, as well as our prayers.

But then the misfortune is, that they have no arguments to convince our understanding, and no authority with which to control our judgment: None from reason, and none from scripture. Our God is not as they would represent him. He requires truth in the inward parts, and instead of laboured changes in the expression of prayer, he demands familiarity with prayer itself. What may gratify the hearer, in extemporaneous addresses, is by no means certain of gratifying him. Our fancies may be amused, and our admiration of the speaker's talents highly wrought; but heartfelt devotion is with God the standard of excellence, and the measure of his grace. Give me this, and I am content with our incomparable liturgy; I will not despair of being finally accepted of our Father in heaven, owing to the absence of variable words, and unpremeditated thoughts.

Neither am I to be deterred from using it, in virtue of another formidable objection, which relates to the responses made by our

congregations: Responses, that are not only freely condemned with the residue of the worship, but are particularly implicated as obvious violations of the inspired command, "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." Since you must allow me to ask, if penitential expressions, extracted with reverence from the scriptures, can under any circumstances of sincere devotion be justly considered vain? Is it not rather the unmeaning and unmeasured employment of Lord, Lord? Is it not rather long and tedious prayer, ever reiterating the same idea in different words, and perhaps preaching to the Father of lights the knowledge of his own perfections?

Taking the Saviour for our guide, you have only to accompany him to the garden of Gethsemane, and you may there behold him fallen upon his face, and three several times repeating the well known prayer, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." And then when the multitude were offended at the continued importunity of blind Bartimeus; when "many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me;" this blessed Being did not reprove him for using vain repetitions. It did not once occur to the Saviour of sinners, that he had expressed himself in language, either unsuited to the occasion, or such as it would be reprehensible to adopt in future times, when the broken and contrite heart would plead with its Maker, and avail itself of the riches of his grace. He rather bestowed unqualified approbation upon his conduct, he relieved him of his malady, and spoke the words of peace and comfort to his troubled spirit.

And so with the condemned responses in the service of the Church. Let us only prefer them with the spirit, and with the understanding: Let us only appear before God weeping, bearing precious seed, and we shall come again rejoicing, whether we use the prayer of the gospel, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us:" or the equally appropriate supplications of the litany, "Good Lord, deliver us," and again, "We beseech thee to hear us, good Lord." The two exclamations being admirably suited to humbling convictions of guilt, and to that now melancholy depravity of our moral powers, which assimilates our race to all that is poor, and miserable, and blind.

and naked. We may easily construct sentences with a more beautiful dress, and conveying a more melodious sound: but there are none, excepting the petitions contained in the prayer of our Lord, better calculated to arrest the attention of heaven, and to draw down upon our souls the mercy of Him, whose favour is life, and whose loving kindness is better than the life itself.

All the views I am capable of embracing of our Saviour's intercourse with his disciples are decidedly in unison with our forms of devotion. You have heard, that he never prayed with them extemporaneously. You have heard that he taught them how to pray. And why these remarkable variations from the practice of many of our modern evangelists? Why, when private devotion is inculcated, does he say to his disciples individually, "THOU, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet: and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly?" But when that which is publick, "If two of you shall AGREE on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where TWO or THREE are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." From these scriptures corroborated by others already adduced, I should think that the prayer uttered by one man ought always to be private, and not in the presence of his fellow men, intent upon catching the words of his mouth, although it were for the purpose of making those words their own. I should think that prayers in publick, where two or three, and of course a larger number are gathered together, ought always to be AGREED upon beforehand, by a mutual understanding of what was to be asked, either committed to memory or to paper. Such are the obvious inferences, and since there is nothing contradictory throughout the new testament, I am bold to affirm, that they are fairly and legitimately drawn.

But still the question recurs, Why these remarkable variations from the practice of many of our modern evangelists? I have already assigned several reasons, and am disposed to advance another founded upon this admonition of Christ, "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." If daily experience and observation have ever instructed the world in any one truth more than another, it is this; the wonderful tendency of extemporaneous prayers to make men spiritually proud, boastful, and uncharitable. Numerous exceptions undoubtedly ex-

ist, and I rejoice that they do. I have no such diabolical feelings, as to regret, that persons are trained up for heaven, in a different communion from that, to which I am so strongly attached. I love to contemplate and admire; I should be glad to be enabled, from on high, to rival the now sainted virtues of Doddridge, Watts, and a host of other worthies long since fallen asleep in Jesus. But as a general rule, it ever has been, and I am apprehensive it ever will be found, that these prayers are followed by such results, and are exceedingly unfavourable to the growth of that humility and lowliness of heart recommended by our Saviour, and perhaps of all graces, the most difficult to be successfully cultivated by any Christian.

On no other principle can I account for the vast amount of scorn and contempt, so prodigally lavished upon precomposed prayers. Upon no other, resolve the melancholy fact, of there being immense numbers of professing believers, who roundly assert, that such as pray with a form can never pray with the heart; that fluent extemporaneous prayer is one of the highest gifts of the Spirit; and that we do not practise it, because he is a stranger to our souls.

God forgive them! I will not so libel the wise and good, the excellent of the earth, as to pray, that these persons may prove egregiously mistaken in their estimate of the purest and holiest men, upon whom the Sun of Righteousness has risen with healing on his wings. But this I must say, that their conduct and their aspersions furnish the best commentary, upon the instruction given by Christ to his disciples, in relation to private and publick prayer.

Be it therefore, Brethren, deeply engraven upon our minds, and let us ever yield to it a most cheerful obedience. So, whatever man may say, shall we secure the approbation of our own consciences. and what is of still greater value and importance the approbation of our God. So, if life be spared, shall we yet perceive the righteousness of our Zion to go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth. And when at length our days are numbered, and our sands are run, so shall we be admitted into Mount Zion above, into that New Jerusalem, where, in the majestick presence of the High and Lofty One, will be everlastingly resounded these memorable forms of praise, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing;" and again, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever." AMEN.

SERMON XIV.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

AS the frequent recital of the text must have rendered it perfectly familiar to the ear, it can scarcely have escaped your observation, Brethren, that the prophet has made an obvious distinction between the righteousness and the salvation of the Church. To the former I have hitherto principally if not entirely confined my remarks. It relates to the exterior edifice of Zion; to that beautiful garb, in which she has been arrayed, by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and presented as a chaste bride to his only begotten and well beloved Son.

Having minutely examined her in this particular; having largely proved the scriptural character and complexion of her external features, that like the king's daughter described in the psalms, "her clothing is of wrought gold;" I cannot but hope that you will consider my early pledges satisfactorily redeemed, and concur with me in the opinion, that in the defence of such a Church as our own, they, who minister at her altar, should, in the spirit of Isaiah, neither hold their peace nor rest, "until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness."

To the latter clause of his interesting vow, I must not however fail to solicit an equal share of attention, although the discussion will be much more partial and restricted. Often in the scriptures, do we meet with such expressions as these; the word of salvation; the joy of salvation. Expressions that are not to be construed literally, but metonymically; salvation having no other connexion with the word or with joy than this, the word unfolds the doctrine of redemption, and there is joy attending the conviction of our being placed in a state of acceptance with God. So in the text: By the salvation of Zion and Jerusalem, it is not meant, that the Church is

the efficient cause of future happiness, nor that every individual within its pale necessarily becomes the heir of glory and immortality. But the real meaning is, that divine truth is therein inculcated; that the doctrines, which are according to godliness accompany the bride of the Holy One; and that men have only to embrace them, with a true heart in full assurance of faith, in order to receive the end of that faith, even the salvation of their souls.

That our Church, Brethren, is fully entitled to this enviable character, I shall endeavour to establish with as much brevity as possible. Examine her doctrines, thoroughly examine, and give to them the unhesitating assent of the mind, the unswerving obedience of the heart; and there is not one of you, but shall have ample reason to rejoice at the zeal of all those, her faithful ministers, who fearlessly and piously resolve, neither to hold their peace nor rest, until the salvation thereof shall go forth as a lamp that burneth.

As you have already learnt, I am not ignorant of the odium, with which sectarian prejudice has contrived to surround her: How every stripling in divinity can brandish the weapons of calumny and detraction, imputing to her clergy and laity principles and practices, which they loathe and abhor. I am not ignorant, that she is looked upon with an evil eye by multitudes, who have no knowledge of the faith she embraces, and the works she is solicitous to maintain. I am not ignorant, that precisely as it was said by them of old time, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" So in these modern days the question is not only asked, Can there any good thing come out of a Church so formal and corrupt? But the assertion is proudly and boldly hazarded, that her members have no saving faith, no vital religion, no warm and decided attachment to their God and Saviour. I am not ignorant of these things, nor of those answers of silent pity and compassion, which they would alone deserve, were it not that many of the pious and worthy are miserably deceived and led away by the most foul aspersions. A consideration sufficiently powerful to prevail with me to attempt the removal of the veil from their eyes, and to inspire them with more just and generous sentiments.

With this view, be it known, that there is not one, among the reformed Churches, which occupies a rank, so distinguished on the page of history; not one, whose zeal for the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom has been so ardent and persevering: not one, to

whom the world has been so much indebted for the labours of love and benevolence. What were the original reformers in England, but Churchmen? What other bodies than theirs were freely given to be burned, in order to satiate the vengeance of a papal queen, and bear the noblest testimony in favour of pure religion and undefiled, before God and the Father? It is not so long since, but we may easily ascertain whose blood it was, that proved the seed of the protestant Church, in the land of our forefathers. Our opponents cannot rob us of the sainted names of Cranmer, and Hooper, and Latimer, and Ridley. These are our martyred worthies; these, the first fruits of our reformed Zion; these, the faithful and holy, who, guided by the directing hand of Providence, first restored her to primitive order and simplicity, and then counted not their lives dear unto them, so that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry, which they had received from the Lord Jesus. Tell me not then, with such examples before the world, such unequivocal demonstrations of love to Christ, and devotedness to his service; tell me not, of the Church reclaimed and purified by them, the Church adorned by their lives, and hallowed by their deaths, that it affords no asylum to the broken and contrite spirit; that its doctrines and worship are unfavourable to the progress of religion in the soul, and its members comparatively destitute of that warmth of attachment towards their august Redeemer, which is vehemently claimed by their Christian brethren. When it shall be seen, that a nobler army of martyrs have laid the foundation of a human Church, and when it shall be proved that our own Zion has degenerated from the doctrines maintained by her almost inspired reformers, it will then be time to boast of a purer origin, a more scriptural faith, and a more holy obedience.

Nor let it cease to be remembered, that the brightest page in modern ecclesiastical history is consecrated to the glory and honour of the Church. "All scripture is" indeed "given by inspiration of God," and is the revelation of his love and mercy, springing from the self devotion and sacrifice of his beloved Son. But wherever our mother tongue prevails; Is it now "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works?" To the Church under God belongs the glory and the praise. The bible we read: the bible we love, is the translation of Church

men. To a numerous body of our divines was committed the high honour and distinguished trust of clothing the word of God in an English dress, of rendering it accessible to the common people, and enabling them to judge for themselves, what were the true doctrines of the cross, the precepts and institutions of the gospel.

And was this performed long after the reformation, in the reign and at the instance of the first James, a monarch pertinaciously attached to our episcopal system of government and articles of faith, and by the labours of men alike persuaded in their minds, and zealous in their affection? Was it performed in a manner, that has justly challenged the applause and admiration of the world; that has extorted the eulogium of criticks, and commanded the approbation of theologians, for the perspicuity of its style, and the fidelity with which it has conveyed the sense of the original? Was it so performed, as to supersede all prior, and obviate the necessity of all subsequent translations; so performed, as to be still retained, not only by us, but by all the orthodox denominations? Oh! tell me no more of the little, that the Church has done for the prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the everlasting welfare of souls. This single work, had she no other to adorn her history, gives her a transcendent claim upon the gratitude and affection of the people, that now lift up their voice against her; that deride her piety, and scorn her holy things.

But for her, they might have been to this very hour destitute of an authorized version of the scriptures; one, in which they could confide, as containing all the words of this life. She alone has supplied them. She has given them the bible, they both read and circulate; and has thus been instrumental in training up amongst them more precious souls for the heavenly world, than all other instruments which God, in his wisdom and goodness, has condescended to employ. Let them think of this, while they look over its pages; let them think of it, when they return thanks to Him, for this powerful mean of converting grace; and let them cease to rail; let them indulge a more charitable spirit towards the descendants of those highly gifted men; descendants, that have imbibed their spirit, and preserved alive and unimpaired the pure doctrines, institutions and worship of the Church. to which they were so ardently attached.

And here, Brethren, you must be sensible, that the time would fail me were I to enumerate the long, long list of worthies, who have graced her annals, and elevated her to the pinnacle of sacred fame. Where are they, that have excelled her divines in the true interpretation of the scriptures, and furnished such practical comments upon them? That have composed such masterly treatises in their defence, and foiled all the arguments of the infidel? That have written so wisely and well upon the doctrinal truths, and preceptive duties of Christianity? That have expended more time, and talents, and treasures, in spreading abroad the knowledge of God; in founding and patronising institutions subservient to the interests, and conformable to the genius of our religion? Far be it from me to withhold the humble tribute of my praise from the wise and good, who have flourished among other denominations, and contributed to enlighten the world, by their mental and spiritual labours. I am rather disposed to love them for their work's sake, and to cherish the memory of their learning and piety with the profoundest esteem.

But when the character of our Church is impugned, and the tendency of her principles and practice more than called in question: When she is violently denounced, and the lamp of her salvation is sought to be extinguished; it would be base and criminal to be silent; it would be to admit the verity of the foulest charges, were I not to advert to the productions of our theologians, and challenge all other Churches to compare with them, in the number and excellency of their writings.

Go to the largest publick libraries of our opponents, and the candid among them will not hesitate to acknowledge, that with comparatively few exceptions, the standard authors and luminaries of the religious world were bred up in the bosom of the Church. Go to their private collections, and from the folios of Scott, to the tracts of Richmond, they are principally derived from the same source.

And is a Church thus justified of her children, thus virtually admitted to have ably defended, and piously enforced the truth as it is in Jesus; is she to be traduced by the pen, and especially by the tongue of calumny, without one effort to exhibit her actual character, and maintain her substantial claims upon the confidence and affection of an abused and misguided community? God forbid! Forbid it righteous heaven! that so great a calamity should ever

befall the vine, which the right hand of Christ hath planted; which the Apostles and innumerable martyrs have watered with their blood; and that only requires to be known, in order to command the esteem and veneration of the West.

Next to the glory of God, the triumph of Christ, and the salvation of all, there is no prayer, which I more cordially present before the throne of grace, than the prayer, that our Church might be universally and thoroughly investigated; that she might be subjected to the severest scrutiny; and be made to pass through the most fiery ordeal. I would keep nothing back. I would have her fathomed to the bottom, and in all things rendered visible as the sun. If she cannot endure the refiner's fire; if when refined as silver is refined, and tried as gold is tried, she does not come out pure and without alloy, in all the essentials and requirements of a true faith, and a holy obedience; then am I content, that her altars shall be trodden down, and her glory given to another; another, that shall prove more trustworthy; more closely identified with the Apostolick Church; more scriptural in every thing, we are commanded to believe and obey.

With these preparatory remarks, I proceed to the examination of her doctrines; those evangelical doctrines, which are of the greatest moment, and upon which I have reason to believe, that the largest amount of misapprehension exists. These are to be gained from the received articles of her faith. Articles, that were first published in England, by Edward the sixth; that were there finally revised and established, by a convocation of the clergy in the year fifteen hundred and seventy one, during the reign of Elizabeth; and that, after the revolution, which wrested our country from the yoke of Britain, were adopted by us, with no other alterations, than such as accommodated them, in a political point of view, to the genius of a republican government. Many of them, it will not be necessary to notice, either because they have already passed in review, or are devoted to subjects, upon which we have been permitted to escape without serious imputations upon our principles and professions.

Our belief, for example, in the catholick doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, has never been questioned. It is solemnly repeated every sabbath, and the language of our first article is thus clear and determinate, "There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness:

the Maker and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead, there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

Our views of the divinity and humanity of Christ are not impugned. "The Son, which is the word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance: So that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God, and very Man."

Our reception of the inspired volume has not been denied. "Holy scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: So that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the holy scripture we do understand those canonical books of the old and new testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church."

We are even allowed, upon the great doctrines of the cross, to have expressed our belief in terms sufficiently explicit and orthodox. But then we are accused of entertaining them, with certain mental reservations, and of harbouring in reality, sentiments materially unsound, and variant from the recorded letter. So far as personally concerned, I do not scruple to repel the calumny with the indignation it deserves. I do most sincerely and heartily subscribe to all the articles of religion embraced by the Church. I have no cause to make, nor have I any confidence in, such secret compromises with the conscience; but freely and unreservedly do I believe every one of those articles, in their plain and literal acceptation. As to others, if there be an exception, in the case of any of our clergy in these United States, it is entirely unknown to me. Our accusers are better informed, and let them substantiate their charges by proof, and not by random assertion.

To descend to particulars; no one doctrine of the scriptures is more important, or necessary to be received, than the fall of man from the state of primitive innocence, with the consequent corruption of all his moral powers, and the transmission of that cor-

ruption to his entire posterity. And what is clearly revealed in the scriptures, the Church as clearly maintains. These are her words, "Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk;) but it is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is VERY FAR GONE from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the Spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation. And this infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated; whereby the lust of the flesh, called in Greek, *Phronema sarcos*, which some do expound the wisdom, some sensuality, some the affection, some the desire of the flesh is not subject to the law of God. And although there is no condemnation for them that believe and are baptized; yet the Apostle doth confess, that concupiscence and lust hath of itself the nature of sin."

And among our orthodox fellow Christians, who is there to object to this open and undisguised avowal of what, it deeply concerns our fallen and guilty race to understand? Some of their number, I am aware, would prefer to substitute "total depravity," for the expression, "very far gone from original righteousness." But with what correctness, may be estimated from the consideration, that it would involve the infant soul, at its birth, in a state equally degraded and polluted with the spirit of the infernal himself. Whereas with these interesting beings, corruption is rather of a negative quality, and indicates the absence of all natural holiness. Sin is in their hearts; but it is dormant; it is sleeping on a congenial couch, from which it rises active and refreshed, as a giant from his slumbers, with the first perceptions of the mind, and the earliest propensities of the flesh; obtaining an ascendancy, in proportion to the failure of the instituted counteracting causes, or the obstinacy, with which the strivings of God's holy Spirit are resisted and withstood.

To support me in these views, I have the testimony of common sense, assuring me, that infants can commit no actual trespasses; I have the testimony of experience, convincing me, that sins unknown to them, and of the blackest turpitude, are the work of man's maturer years; I have the testimony of Jesus Christ, declaring unto each of us, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God

as a little child, he shall not enter therein." All which is utterly irreconcilable with total depravity, and enough to deter me from adopting that most unnatural and unwarrantable phrase.

Still however it must not be concealed, that there is no inborn health in us; that we are naturally inclined to evil; and that left to ourselves, we could only forge new links to the chain, which fastens us to the chariot wheels of sin. Whoever thinks otherwise; whoever preaches otherwise, knows little of himself, little of his fellow men, and still less of the gospel. He may amuse his hearers with beautiful delineations of the innocence and the dignity of their nature; but having relinquished the most powerful motive for their reliance upon the Rock of Ages, he will be apt to inspire them with a degree of self confidence, visionary and fatal in the extreme. He will certainly impute falsehood to David where he says, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." He will flatly contradict the Apostle, where he feelingly communes with himself, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now, if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but SIN that DWELLETH in me. I find then a LAW, that, when I would do good, SIN is PRESENT with me." While therefore we renounce the idea of total depravity, as absurdly applied to any other beings, than the devil and his angels, we cordially agree with the Church in the belief, that "man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the Spirit." Let our adversaries assert what they please, upon this belief we preach, and upon this warn every hearer of the absolute, and indispensable necessity of a radical change of the heart and its affections.

But why do we warn EVERY hearer? Why urge upon ALL the duty of becoming faithful, and penitent, and holy? It is because we believe with the Church, that "The offering of Christ once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual;" which she describes to be "the one oblation," and avers, that "there is none other satisfaction for sin, but that alone." It is because, discarding all metaphysical subtleties, we give the only just and

natural construction to such inspired declarations, as these, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto ALL MEN." "As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon ALL MEN unto justification of life." "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one DIED FOR ALL, then were all dead." "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should TASTE DEATH FOR EVERY MAN." "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that ANY should perish, but that ALL should come to repentance." "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth ALL MEN every where to repent." "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have ALL MEN to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself A RANSOM FOR ALL, to be testified in due time."

Yes, Brethren, such is our creed, such the support it obtains from the scriptures, and although the limits I have prescribed to myself will not permit me to embark in the full discussion of its merits, a brief statement of the opposite doctrine will disclose a system of faith, from which your minds must recoil with abhorrence, and at the same time coincide with me, in pronouncing it to be an outrageous libel upon the true character of God, and the mission of Christ.

Contrary then to the article of our Church, which asserts, that this gracious Being made a "perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual;" it is maintained as the first principle in the Calvinistick creed, that his atonement was partial and particular; that it only embraced the sins of a portion of the human race, while those of the residue of their fellow creatures have neither been atoned for, nor themselves placed in a situation, wherein it is possible to partake of the mercy of God. The pen almost refuses to transcribe an opinion, so diametrically at war with the scriptures, and so inconsistent with their proverbial invitations to all sinners to repent to believe, and to obey.

if the preceding texts were not sufficient, it is contradicted in terms by St. Peter, "There shall be false teachers among you, who shall privily bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that BOUGHT THEM, and bring upon themselves swift DESTRUCTION." Also by St. Paul, "DESTROY not him with thy meat for whom Christ DIED;" and again, where his remonstrance upon the subject of meats offered to idols turns upon the fact expressed in these words, "Through thy knowledge shall the weak brother PERISH, for WHOM Christ DIED."

Nothing then can be more evident, than the final destruction from the presence of the Lord of many, whose sins were completely atoned for, by the death and sacrifice of the Lamb of God. And yet upon the foundation of a partial atonement, or particular redemption of the elect, and the elect alone, is built the whole theory of election and reprobation. I will give it to you in the words of Calvin; "Predestination we call the eternal decree of God, by which he hath determined in himself, what he would have to become of every individual of mankind. For they are not all created with a similar destiny; but eternal life is foreordained for some, and eternal damnation for others. Every man therefore, being created for one or the other of these ends, we say, he is predestinated either to life or to death."

It is impossible, Brethren, for any language to be easier of comprehension, and if true, our future destiny was unalterably fixed before the worlds were made. Some of us were created for the express purpose of being saved, and some of us for the express purpose of being damned. And that I am not putting a false construction upon the extract from Calvin, whether it regards the one class or the other, will be apparent from the testimony borne by several of his followers.

In relation to the elect, and the certainty of their salvation, Coles on the sovereignty of God, remarks, "As it was not any loveliness in elect persons which moved God to love them at first, so neither shall their unlovely backslidings deprive them of it."

The celebrated preacher, Rowland Hill assures us, that "David stood as completely justified in the everlasting righteousness of Christ, at the time, when he caused Uriah to be murdered, and was committing adultery with his wife, as he was in any part of his life. For all the sins of the elect, be they more, or be they less,

be they past, present, or to come, were forever done away. So that every one of these elect stand spotless in the sight of God."

The same principle is espoused by Mason in his *Spiritual Treasury*, "Suppose a believer to be taken away in his sin, and hath not time to repent of it, there was that in him, that would have repented, and God reckons of a man according to that he would do." The same author, and there are none more highly esteemed among the writers of his class, in another place uses expressions, yet more extraordinary and reprehensible; "Though a believer be black as hell, polluted with guilt, defiled with sin, yet in Christ, he is all fair without a spot; free from sin, as viewed by God in Christ, fully reconciled to God, and standing without trespasses before him." As I have not however been able to find these sentiments in the American edition of Mason, I conclude that an expurgation has been deemed prudent; but they appear in that, published in London by Romaine.

Such then, Brethren, according to these men, may be the character of the elect of God, without in the smallest degree impairing their right and title to look for a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and no less strongly, decidedly, and unconditionally are the reprobate consigned to everlasting perdition.

Zanchius, the Swiss reformer, declares, that "the reprobate are bound by the ordinance of God under the necessity of sinning;" and Beza his countryman, that "God hath predestinated, not only unto damnation, but also unto the causes of it, whomsoever he saw meet."

Calvin himself pronounces of this benevolent Being, and of his designs in relation to sinners, "He directs his voice to them, but it is that they may become more deaf; he kindles a light, but it is that they may be more blind; he publishes his doctrine, but it is that they may be made more besotted; he applies a remedy, but it is that they may not be healed."

Perkins, an old English divine, affirms, that "God hath most justly decreed even the wicked works of the wicked;" and Knox, the Scotch reformer, that "The wicked are not only left by God's suffering, but are compelled to sin by his power."

I shall conclude with Toplady, the most renowned of all the modern advocates of Calvinism, and one of the few of that description

in the Church of England. "God did not barely suffer, but positively intended and decreed them, (the reprobate) to continue in their natural blindness and hardness of heart." "He does not only negatively withhold from the wicked his grace, which alone can restrain them from evil; but occasionally, in the course of his providence, he puts them into circumstances of temptation, such as shall cause the persons so tempted actually to turn aside from the path of duty to commit sin." "The sentence of God, which rejects the reprobates, is so fixed and immutable, that it is impossible they should be saved, though they have performed all the works of the saints: and therefore, it is not true, that those who perish through their own fault, might have been saved through grace, if they had not ceased labouring for saving grace."

How disgusting the features, how dreadful the portrait, I have here felt myself compelled to exhibit from the writings of men, with one or two exceptions, the principal leaders and promoters in the ranks of schism. They remind me of the observation of Erasmus, the most learned of those, who flourished at the period of the reformation; "This new gospel, founded upon the doctrine of absolute decrees, has produced a new generation of obstinate, impudent, hypocritical people, who are revilers, liars, deceivers; and who do not agree among themselves, and are very uneasy to others; who are seditious, furious, given to cavilling; and with whom I am so much dissatisfied, that if I knew any town where none of them were, I would go thither, and choose to live in it." They remind me of what was long since declared, by Bishop Seabury of our own American Church, when exposing the prominent error of Calvinism; "All objects are said to appear yellow to the jaundiced eye. Predestination is to the mind what the jaundice is to the body. The whole bible appears tinged with a sickly, yellow hue, when the predestinarian looks into it, especially if he be of a morose and vindictive temper, as most commonly is the case. To see God consigning the greater part of mankind to eternal misery, in consequence of his own arbitrary decree, just to show that he can do it, and will do it—for the glory of his justice, as they call it—seems to be congenial and grateful to his heart: and, in truth, the consequences of this doctrine, carried to its full extent, however the abettors of it may not own or see them, represent Almighty God, the God of goodness and love, to whom be glory for ever, in a

more unamiable light than it is possible for human wit to represent the devil."

I feel myself therefore, Brethren, fully authorized to repeat, that you cannot but coincide with me, in pronouncing it to be an outrageous libel upon the true character of God, and the mission of Christ. The naked recital of such a system is all that is requisite to ensure its rejection, wherever the mind is unprejudiced, and reason is suffered calmly and dispassionately to investigate the oracles of truth. They afford it no countenance, and the seventeenth article of the Church will hereafter be found to be equally free from the imputation.

Is it then for refusing to adopt a theory so grossly absurd, and even detestable, when expounded by its most zealous partisans? Is it for this, that the great body of our clergy are accused of lukewarmness in the cause of their Redeemer, if a Redeemer they have? Long may they give occasion to endure the reproach. Long may they present our heavenly Father and the Son of his love, in a more inviting and encouraging aspect to the minds and consciences of sinners. Not one of you, Brethren, shall hereafter perish, through any arbitrary, irrespective, and irreversible decree. Not one of you, because your eternal life was never purchased by a Saviour's all-atoning blood. But if ye perish, the fault will be your own: the awful catastrophe will be owing to your own perverse refusal to believe and obey the words of eternal life.

And may these considerations stimulate you to new and more vigorous efforts to make your calling and election sure. If ye will but permit your faith to be active, your repentance to be genuine, and your obedience perfect, not all the preposterous opinions of men will avail to exclude you from the mansions of everlasting felicity. But by his Spirit working in due season, the very God of peace will sanctify you wholly, he will lift up the light of his reconciled countenance upon you, and finally, for Christ's sake, admit you into the presence of his exceeding glory. AMEN.

SERMON XV.

ISAIAH lxii. 1

*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake
I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness,
and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

THERE are few topicks in divinity less understood than that of predestination. It is owing to the strange conceits and metaphysical species of dialecticks, which have usurped the name, and transformed the pure, intelligible doctrine of the scriptures into a hideous monster of deformity, odious to the eye, and revolting to the mind and heart. I gave you some specimens of this character upon the recent sabbath, and am confident, that no rational being, if left to the free and unrestrained exercise of his own faculties and judgment, would permit himself to be deluded by a system so derogatory to the goodness, and subversive of the justice of the Deity.

To make men for the sole object of damning them everlastingly? To impute such a motive to the benignant Being, who presides over the universe, and whose tender mercies are represented to be over all his works! The act itself is shocking to our moral feelings, and the imputation, if it had never been hazarded by men of piety and learning; if it had now for the first time been submitted to our examination, would be universally denounced, as impious and ever blasphemous to the last degree. It would be considered a new edition of those mythological crudities, which invested the heathen gods and goddesses, with the most ferocious and vindictive passions which made the earth, the beleagured object of their tyranny, and the bodies and souls of men, the hapless victims of their unrelenting malice.

Never would it be tolerated, that our heavenly Father was capable of forming and publishing a decree, so despotick and unjust, so repugnant to the perfections, with which the bible delights to encircle him, and so hostile to the best and dearest interests of a

large proportion of our race. But the true scriptural doctrine would be unanimously embraced. Predestination would be presented and received in its more attractive, and only authentick form. That it does exist in the sacred volume cannot be seriously denied. But then as dissimilar to the refined absurdities of Calvin, as light is dissimilar to darkness, and truth to falsehood.

For what if God is there said to have predetermined the fate of every man? It is not with reference to persons, but to their characters. It is not by a capricious creation or selection of a certain number to be saved, and a certain number to be damned. But from everlasting the decree hath gone forth; from everlasting to everlasting, it hath been ordained, that the righteous shall hereafter be supremely blessed, and the unrighteous supremely miserable. And is not this materially variant from determining as to the persons, who shall be irresistibly constrained to become the one and the other?

When human laws describe offences, and for their prevention impose an adequate penalty to be visited on the guilty: Does this compel you to commit them? Are any selected from the mass of their fellow citizens, and by the statutes of the land invincibly coerced to the perpetration of robbery, of arson, of murder? Under such circumstances, I am sure you would find none to condemn them, as criminals; no judge or jury to pronounce them justly amenable to the severity of penal inflictions. They must rather have first occupied the attitude of free agents. Obedience and disobedience, with the respective consequences, must have been fairly set before them, and then, if they voluntarily transgress, the laws, enacted for the punishment of all transgressors, would have personal application to each individual robber, incendiary, or murderer.

And precisely thus with the decrees of God: He requires of all men to be righteous. He tells them in what righteousness consists. He promises his divine assistance in enabling them to obtain it; and, as an inducement to ardent and persevering exertions on their part, he has decreed in case of cheerful obedience, to give them the blessing of life eternal. He also demands of them to abstain from all unrighteousness. He explains its nature. He assures them of his inclination to bestow upon them power to triumph over it; and as a motive to operate upon their minds and consciences, he has decreed in case of disobedience, to consign them over to the vengeance of eternal fire.

Yes, Brethren, these are the decrees or laws of God, the eternal purposes he has entertained and proclaimed in relation to the present conduct and future destiny of all mankind. They admit of free agency. They constitute a fair, undisguised, and impartial system of jurisprudence. They convince us, that instead of being controlled, by a secret and unavoidable fatality, to become either righteous or unrighteous, we are to a certain extent the arbiters of our own condition, both in time and in eternity. Religion and irreligion are at our own option. If we embrace the former, it will be the life; if the latter, it will be the death of our souls. There is no such thing as original celestial love for the person of one man, and hatred for that of another. Character is here every thing. Righteousness and unrighteousness, obedience and disobedience, these alone are the objects of the divine decrees. After what Christ has achieved in reconciling the world to God, through these are the faithful to be rewarded, and the unfaithful punished at the judgment of the great day.

If a different doctrine from this is to be found in our seventeenth article, I have not the sagacity to detect it. Not one syllable does it contain of individual reprobation or preterition, although inseparably connected with unconditional election in the opinion of Calvin and his followers. "Predestination to life is" indeed declared to be, "the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed, by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation, those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour."

But here is nothing discrepant from my sentiments; nothing that the clergy of the Church are indisposed to maintain. Never do they deny, that "the godly consideration of predestination, and our election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things." That godly consideration this article concisely asserts, and no Christians in their senses will object to the predestination, which, founded upon the word of righteousness, entirely harmonizes with all their hopes and expectations, "as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal salvation, to be enjoyed

through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God:" Which indeed assures them of their final acceptance with him, not from any capricious exercise of omnipotent power; but from the fact of their having fully and cordially closed with the overtures made them through Christ. "Wherefore," as the article before recites of those converted by his saving grace, "Wherefore they, which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God, be called according to God's purpose by His Spirit working in due season: they through grace obey the calling: they be justified freely: they be made sons of God by adoption: they be made like the image of his only begotten Son Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works: and at length by God's mercy they attain to everlasting felicity."

And let me tell you, Brethren, that every man placed within the sound of the gospel, is "called according to God's purpose working in due season;" although it is but too evident, that many refuse to obey. Whoever does, the article pronounces predestined to eternal life, and I ask for no more consoling doctrine. I perceive that the predestination of the bible, and the predestination of the Church are in perfect concord. So little sympathy has she for the monstrous absurdity of making our Father in heaven create immortal souls, merely to evince his power and determination to punish them everlastingly from his presence, as to declare, that "for curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchlessness of most unclean living no less perilous than desperation." So clearly does she coincide with the views I am desirous to inculcate, as to affirm, that "we must receive God's promises in such wise as they be generally set forth to us in holy scripture: And in our doings, that will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared unto us in the word of God."

All which is manifestly inconsistent with decrees of election and reprobation, ordained without foresight of obedience on the one hand, or of disobedience on the other. Since those promises are directed to all who believe and repent, and the divine Being is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." The followers of Calvin may therefore continue to determine, that "The decrees were not formed in consequence of any

FORESIGHT of sin or holiness in the reprobate or elect? Our Zion will not so determine, will not so positively circumscribe the goodness and mercy of God, as to defeat the voluntary co-operation of man in the work of his salvation, and to render numbers of our race incapable of acquiring that sincere faith and holy obedience, which bring the Christian within the covenant of grace, and the predestination of the godly to life eternal. She advances a doctrine more analagous to common sense, more respectful to the attributes of the Deity, more illustrative of the extent of his benevolence, and more conformable to what the Apostle Peter proclaimed to the strangers enumerated in his first epistle, that they were "Elect according to the FOREKNOWLEDGE of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto OBEDIENCE and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus."

Here however I am told, that the foreknowledge of the Deity is in effect precisely the same with his predestination; in other words, that what he foreknows must as certainly come to pass, as what he predestines. But allow me to assure you, that no opinion can be more unfounded. It entirely destroys the necessity of a superintending Providence, interfering with and regulating the affairs of men; it engages us in a vain and fallacious service, when we return thanks to God, for having saved our lives from destruction in the hour of impending danger; and it contradicts a very plain and explicit narrative recorded in the twenty third chapter of the first book of Samuel. Keilah, a town besieged by the Philistines, was rescued from their grasp by David acting under the immediate direction of God. "And it was told Saul that David was come to Keilah. And Saul said, God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in, by entering into a town that hath gates and bars. And Saul called all the people together to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men. And David knew that Saul secretly practised mischief against him: and he said to Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod. Then said David, O Lord God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake. Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? Will Saul come down as thy servant hath heard? O Lord God of Israel, I beseech thee, tell thy servant. And the Lord said, HE WILL COME DOWN. Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And the Lord said, THEY WILL DELIVER THEE UP. Then David

and his men, which were about six hundred, arose and DEPARTED out of Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go. And it was told Saul that David was escaped from Keilah; and HE FORBARE TO GO FORTH."

Here then, you perceive a wide distinction between the foreknowledge and the predestination of events. To the inquiries of David, concerning Saul and the people of Keilah, the answers of God were positive and direct, "HE WILL COME DOWN."—"THEY WILL DELIVER THEE UP." And will you undertake to assert, that they proceeded not from an attribute purely divine? Will you deny, that the prescience of God, enabled him to reveal the intended enterprise of Saul, and the course, which would be pursued by the ungrateful inhabitants, provided their town was invested? An enterprise directed against Keilah, and a course fatal to the liberty and the life of David.

Surely, Brethren, unless you are disposed to think that the immaculate Jehovah may sometimes trifle with his dependant creatures, may sometimes delight to render them the miserable dupes of a capricious and unfounded revelation; you must believe, that these replies had their foundation in the FOREKNOWLEDGE of God, and at the same time deem it totally inconsistent with his veracity to communicate as forthcoming events, what he had previously determined from all eternity never should transpire. Nor can you fail to remark in this gracious dispensation, such an interposing providence, as penetrates and overrules the designs of men, in pursuance of a settled system of moral government; and such a display of divine FORESIGHT, as had not the remotest connexion with PRE-EXISTING DECREES, because the very circumstances unfolded never occurred: Saul forbore to go forth, and the men of Keilah did not betray their guest and deliverer, because he availed himself of the disclosures of the Deity to frustrate the malignity of his open, and the treachery of his secret foes.

What then becomes of the supposed identity of foreknowledge, with predestination? That which is DECREED by God must necessarily COME TO PASS. What becomes of another doctrine of the same school, insisting, that God only foreknows, because he has previously predestined? A relation of facts is here recorded absolutely incompatible with such priority. For were it true, how could the Almighty have declared without any reservation what

xxvi. "HE WILL COME DOWN;"—"THEY WILL DELIVER THEE UP;" when he must certainly have known, in virtue of his own ETERNAL DECREE, that such incidents could not possibly ensue? But if foresight in him is not the consequent of preordination; if mankind are indeed left to act in a state of probation, according to impressions made upon their minds by external objects, and in compliance with their own volition; then can we easily comprehend that the Omniscient foreseeing the designs of David's enemies, and applied to in the way he had himself prescribed, might providentially interfere to advise him of his danger, revealing what would inevitably follow, if he remained in Keilah, and leaving it to his own discretion to adopt such measures as the exigency required. Hence the safety of the future monarch of Israel, and hence this plain, unvarnished scripture, that more valuable than volumes of metaphysical disquisitions, clearly falsifies the groundwork of a chimerical theory in language, too intelligible to be misunderstood, too obvious to be easily tortured in subserviency to that fatal necessity, which first fetters its victim with an irreversible destiny, and then condemns him for transgressions he could not avoid.

Nor can the doctrine of absolute unconditional predestination be fairly deduced from any part of the sacred volume. It is true, that many passages have been plausibly enlisted in its support; but as far the larger number of able divines apprehend, without any adequate reason for the interpretation given them. Thus, for example, the acknowledgment, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" is often adduced in favour of arbitrary election and reprobation, when a candid examination ought to convince us, that this discrimination related exclusively to the line of conveyance through which the promised seed was to descend. In which sense, Jacob was selected to the prejudice of Esau, and in the emphatick language of the scriptures, it is well said, that the one was loved and the other hated. So also Abraham was loved in preference to Nahor, Isaac to Ishmael, Judah to Reuben, and so on to the virgin Mary, who was loved, and all other women hated, inasmuch as she was chosen to be the mother of Christ, and they were all superseded. A construction, that is amply confirmed by the observation of our Saviour to his followers, "If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

For if the explanation, which has been given, to the expression "Esau have I hated," be not correct, the authority of Jesus may be drawn to vindicate the basest, vilest feelings, the human heart is capable of entertaining, and this in direct contradiction to the well known averment, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer," and to various other passages inculcating parental, filial, fraternal and connubial love. While upon the supposition of its accuracy, the requisition of our Lord is perfectly intelligible, and strictly conformable to what he has elsewhere said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me."

I have here examined the account of Jacob and Esau's relative situation in the favour of God, not because it is more readily and satisfactorily explained than other texts brought to verify the dogma of irrespective decrees; but because upon a cursory perusal it is perhaps most likely to create erroneous impressions with those, that are either disinclined or unable to interpret scripture by scripture. Did my limits permit; to demonstrate that the epistles of Paul are equally free from these modern speculations, or rather revived reveries of Augustin, would not be the less feasible or conclusive. The election of the Apostle has an undoubted reference to the admission of the Gentiles to the privileges of the gospel on its rejection by the Jews; who, from being a chosen and peculiar people, were, by their spontaneous renunciation of the blessed Jesus, deprived of the enviable distinction, in order to share its benefits with the despised posterity of Esau, in due time, breaking the spiritual yoke of Jacob from their necks, and so far recovering the birthright of their ancestor, as to inherit alike the promises made unto Abraham. In this point of view, the Jews as a nation were once the elect of God, and are so described, when multitudes of their number were wholly destitute of divine and saving grace; and in this point of view, the Gentiles have succeeded to be the elect of God, when it is to be feared scarcely a less proportion are sadly unconscious of the inestimable benefits they enjoy; and whose condemnation will unquestionably be the more disastrous, from the very circumstance of their election, to a knowledge of Christ, being insufficient to put "a new spirit" within them, to "take away the stony heart out of" their "flesh, and give" them "a heart of flesh."

How idle then to convert national into individual dispensations; from the election of the great body of the Gentiles, to infer that of private persons. Even the rapid glance I have taken must convince you of the absence of all scriptural evidence in its favour, and nothing is more certain than the destructive, demoralizing consequences attending the belief of a divine and unchangeable foreordination of whatsoever comes to pass.

With those, who have already obtained the one thing needful; who are truly born again and confederate with the spirit of Christ, it may not have a very injurious tendency. So long as the perfection of reason remains a desideratum, many untenable hypotheses will continue to be framed, where there is no sympathy for vice or irreligion, and that, when sincerely entertained, it becomes us to expose without impeaching the practical faith and holiness of *their* defenders. More than this, it would however be criminal to concede. For when the circulation of error, even under the most honest convictions of its truth, is known to be followed by calamitous effects to the world of sinners; it is the duty of all, who minister in holy things to investigate, not so much the motives which give it currency, as the validity of its claims upon human credence. They may, and they should, caution a fellow labourer to beware how he propagates a doctrine, which the earliest Christians never thought of, and which innumerable theologians have treated as a false induction from a few insulated texts not happily compared with the general scope of the inspired writings. And yet, they must mainly importune the sinner to beware, how he receives for truth a system of predestination, that being utterly subversive of free agency, destroys effectually the doctrine of accountability, with the personal morality and immorality of all our actions.

I know that this is a corollary warmly denied by its supporters; but it is a denial, that they cannot sustain by any successful appeal to reason, any successful effort to reconcile as glaring a paradox as was ever seriously advanced. Here they acknowledge their inability, and did this merely arise from the incomprehensibility of the subject, because, like the divine nature, it is transcendental, in other words, above our intellectual ken, it would form no insurmountable obstacle to its reception. But when it absolutely contradicts every admitted principle of ratiocination, every semblance of probability and even of possibility, there can be no danger in renouncing it, at

a creed, that never was and never will be applied to any valuable or practical purpose.

It may indeed often inbolden the sinner to linger in his headlong career to destruction. To him, it may prove an emollient temporary balm; it may cicatrize the wounds of his conscience, to be persuaded, that his guilty conduct results from a fatal and uncontrollable necessity. But happily for all truly pious men, they never rely upon a personal decree of election, as if it could justify their avoidance of a sober, righteous, and godly life. They rather prefer to be "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." It is in this manner, that they exhibit their saving knowledge of Christ, and it is thus, that every unsanctified predestinarian must eventually believe and obey, or he will never be welcomed into the blissful presence of Him, "Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile: But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God."

And if no respect of persons, Brethren, if the uncompromising language of the scriptures be, "not the hearers of the law, are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified;" then, as I before remarked, he must look altogether to character; he can accept no man's person; upon character he must predicate his decrees; and upon character, growing out of free choice and not irresistible fate, award the respective issues of eternity. Such is the doctrine of the bible. Such is the doctrine, which the Church prefers to the gloomy opinions of the French reformer. And if for this she is to be traduced, the universal diffusion of the truth can alone relieve her from the envenomed tongue of calumny. Her sentiments will not be surrendered. Like the holy oracles from which they are deduced, her articles of religion will steadfastly resist all the encroachments of heresy and delusion.

There is however one cause of misconception upon this subject, which I must not neglect to notice. A proper line of demarcation is not generally preserved between the peculiarities of Calvin, and

those leading doctrines of the cross, which he only maintains in common with the orthodox divines of every age; and the consequence is, that the Church often meets with opposition from persons, who if better informed would not withhold from her the tribute of their esteem.

Be it therefore remembered, that the peculiarities in question are these, the belief in total depravity; in partial redemption; in unconditional election and reprobation; in irresistible grace and instantaneous conversion; and in the final, or more correctly, the certain perseverance of the saints. All of them, doctrines unknown to our articles, and that should be carefully distinguished from the radical and essential principles of the gospel, to which every faithful minister is accustomed to take heed, as well to preserve himself, as the souls committed to his care, in all things pertaining to eternal life.

And yet, how often have they been confounded with these last, with sentiments purely evangelical, and revealed from heaven: How often has the ambassador for Christ, besought his hearers, and prayed them in Christ's stead be ye reconciled unto God; repent ye of your sins; deplore your natural corruption; desire of God in earnest prayer to change and renew the deadness of your affections, to infuse into your hearts the faith that worketh by love, and above all, to purify your souls in the blood of the Lamb, that taketh away the sins of the world. How often has he enforced these topicks with the solemn sanctions of an eternal judgment according to righteous; and then, how promptly has he been denounced for his enthusiasm, his fanaticism, his terrorism, and probably with a view to crown the climax of opprobrium, how has he been reviled for his Calvinism.

But what pitiable, what lamentable infatuation is this. To conjure into being some huge misshapen mass of deformity, and mingling with its crudities the blessed religion of Christ, to give the unnatural compound some uncouth and frightful name, and immediately discard it for a bugbear and a lie. We might as well reject all truth, because it has at times been made to coalesce with error. On such ground, protestants might renounce their Saviour, since his worship is divided with the Catholic; Christians abjure their God, since his name and attributes are known and honoured by the Jew.

It should therefore be a matter of extreme caution with every man, how he trifles with sacred things, and how he resolves them into the mere speculations of the human mind. Such speculations may be ingenious, and yet false; they may be abstruse and erudite, and yet nothing worth. Universally may they be disowned, without impairing the piety, or endangering the salvation of the soul. But at the same time, let each individual be sure, that neither passion, nor prejudice, nor ignorance is suffered to triumph over his understanding, to the disparagement of those words of eternal life, which, so far from being exclusively Calvinistick, have been adhered to by the friends of Jesus from the earliest promulgation of the gospel; those words of eternal life, which the Church ever has recognised, and which she never will relinquish, so long as she retains a sanctuary for her children, and a faithful minister to stand at her altar.

She is indeed catholick and enlightened in her views of religion, but in nothing does she presume to be more so, than its divine Author; in nothing will she sooner accommodate herself to the lax principles of some, than to the excessively rigid and austere sentiments of others. But her course is the happy medium pursued by Christ himself; in appearance simple without baldness, and beautiful without pageantry; in spirit humble without cant, and grave without hypocrisy; in doctrine liberal without licentiousness, and tenacious without bigotry. Whoever repairs to her, with other views and prepossessions, must either rescind them, or find no pleasure in her communion. He must walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, or he will obtain no passport from her to the heavenly world.

The preceding remarks must have convinced you, that the melancholy doctrines of arbitrary election and reprobation have no form, nor comeliness, no beauty in her eyes, that she should desire them; and with the divine blessing, I propose, upon the ensuing sabbath, to prove, that she is equally pure and free from blemish, in the remaining articles of her faith. And may Almighty God, of his infinite mercy, enable us to discern their truth; may we be induced to receive them into honest and good hearts; may he grant us capacity to understand, wisdom to improve, and grace to obey; and to Him, the Father, to the Son, and Holy Ghost, three persons and one God, shall be ascribed all the glory, and honour, and praise, world without end. AMEN.

SERMON XVI.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

HAVING concluded a very brief and cursory survey of the doctrines of the Church, in relation to the natural corruption of man, the extent of Christ's redemption, and the much debated subjects of election and reprobation; I am compelled to prolong the investigation, for the purpose of vindicating "the salvation thereof," in some other particulars, upon which her opinions are either grossly misunderstood or designedly misrepresented. Ignorance is unquestionably the principal cause; but then the promotion of a sect, the interests of a party, come in for their full share of productive capital, in the ungracious office of defaming the views, she is solicitous to maintain upon the prominent features of the gospel.

It is said, for example, that we entertain a confident persuasion of the inherent capacity of the sinner to work out his own salvation, and that the Holy Spirit is by no means an indispensable agent in the process of conversion. But where our accusers obtain their authority for a charge, so grave and imposing, is to me entirely unknown. If true, it would indeed destroy all our pretensions to the Christian name, and convict us of what the Apostles would have boldly pronounced a damnable heresy. We deny it with deserved, and I trust with holy indignation. No more can we advance one single step towards the attainment of the graces of religion, without the assistance of the Spirit of our God, than deprived of his providential care and protection, we could inspire one breath of air, or move a muscle of the body. But are we here corporeally dependant? So in the more noble functions and susceptibilities of the soul, we are spiritually dependant; the Holy Ghost is our indispensable guide and director: the purveyor of every good thought, and word, and deed.

Listen to the strong and plenary language of our tenth article, "The condition of man after the fall of Adam, is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God: wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God, by Christ preventing" that is, preceding "us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will." Does this look like winning Christ and heaven, by our own unaided efforts? Can our fellow Christians present us with a more humble acknowledgment of their reliance upon the divine assistance? Let them produce it; let an inquisition be held, and if it should prove scriptural and orthodox, we will gladly embrace it: we have no objection to the most positive contradiction of mere human ability to choose the good, and refuse the evil.

All that we contend for is this. In the order of nature, God hath given us power to elevate the arm in compliance with our own volition, and in the order of grace, he has equally bestowed upon us the power to learn his will, and observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded us. Upon no other principle can we account for the well known remonstrance addressed to the Jewish nation, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help," or that yet more severe reprimand pronounced, by our Saviour, against the unbelieving Jews, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." Declarations, which plainly indicate the necessity of human co-operation, in attaining the virtues of the divine life, and as plainly evince, that the inclination of God to save is only frustrated by the disinclination of man to obey. Power he gives, capacity he does not withhold, the Spirit is perpetually admonishing us to accept the overtures of redeeming love; but whatever may have been the character of Paul's conversion, the age of miracles has terminated; supernatural coercion is no longer employed. We have it submitted to our personal choice to become penitent, and faithful, and obedient, and in case of failure, can ascribe it to no other cause, than our fatal opposition to the will of heaven. Irresistible grace is an invention of modern times. He, that waits for it, may as soon calculate upon gathering a redundant harvest from fallow ground. If he does not put forth the best labour of his head and heart, he will only sow the wind and reap the whirlwind.

There is however another form, in which the same charge is virtually brought against us. We are accused of disowning the new birth, or rather of limiting it to the external act of baptism. Upon what foundation? Because in our baptismal offices, immediately after the sacrament is administered, it is said, "Seeing now, dearly beloved Brethren, that this child is regenerate;" and "these persons are regenerate, and grafted into the body of Christ's Church." But a more illiberal criticism was never offered: a more disingenuous appeal to the prejudices of the uninformed never made. When will the individuals, who seemingly love to misinterpret our language, learn to be candid and magnanimous? How often are we to be required to refute an oft refuted calumny?

If there were the slightest real cause for its circulation, there would be no applause from the Christian world, which they might justly challenge, for their unremitting assiduity in decrying a Church capable of countenancing so gross a fallacy, as to identify the shadow, with the substance of religion; as to confound the outward and visible sign, with the inward and spiritual grace of holy baptism. But no such thing: We maintain no such fallacy. Earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints, we rather insist upon the absolute necessity of being spiritually born again, in order to our acceptance with God, and ultimate enjoyment of the kingdom of heaven. In applying the word "REGENERATE" to the baptized, we are indeed justified by the authority of Paul, who speaks of the outward symbol, as "the washing of regeneration," and the inward grace, as the "renewing of the Holy Ghost." And when infants are thus brought to Christ, its reception implies a change of state, a transmission from the world into his kingdom; when adults present themselves, we are bound to believe, in the judgment of charity, that they come forward with convicted hearts and sanctified minds. If otherwise, then are they only REGENERATE in the lower and ceremonial, and not in the higher and spiritual sense. The distinction is happily expressed in our twenty seventh article; "Baptism is NOT ONLY a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not Christened: BUT it is also a sign of regeneration, or new birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive baptism RIGHTLY are grafted into the Church: the promises of the forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy

Ghost, are **VISIBLY** signed and sealed: faith is confirmed, and grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God."

How idle then to impute to us a belief in mere sacramental regeneration! How idle! When a thorough change of the heart and its affections is constantly urged upon the hearer, and described, as "A death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness: For being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace:" When the qualifications required of adult persons, previous to their baptism, are these, "Repentance whereby they forsake sin; and faith, whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that sacrament." Whoever misconstrues language forcible and unequivocal as this, must be determined to misconstrue. Whoever, secretly insinuates or openly declares, that we have no faith in the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit in producing these blessed results, can from his own feelings derive but a very faint conception of the sincerity, with which, after the ordinance of baptism is celebrated, we address this prayer to our heavenly Father; "GIVE THY HOLY SPIRIT to these persons; that being now BORN AGAIN, and made heirs of everlasting salvation, through our Lord Jesus Christ, they may continue thy servants, and attain thy promises, through the same Lord Jesus Christ thy Son."

The truth is, that there is no Church, there is no ministry set for the defence of the gospel, more strenuous in contending for a radical change of nature; a change of a moral, as well as of an intellectual character; a change in the habits, inclinations, and delights of the soul. We have no confidence in loud professions, none in mere ceremonial compliances. We are for making Christians such as Paul, as dead to sin, and as alive to righteousness. We are for counselling you, Brethren, "as the truth is in Jesus, that ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." And is all this happily effected? Instead of imputing it to unassisted human capabilities, we gratefully acknowledge, it is only "through the Spirit," that man can "mortify the deeds of the body;" it is "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus," that doth make us "free from the law of sin and death."

Another charge, frequently advanced against the Church and its clergy is, that we decry the doctrine of justification by faith, and prefer to attribute our salvation to the merit of our good works. And if the words of an enemy are to be credited, there can be no doubt of our guilt; we are wonderfully reprobate concerning the true faith, and have need to be taught what are the first principles of the doctrine of Christ. But what is our own statement? To whom do we profess to look for salvation? What is the tenour of the article most cordially and unreservedly embraced by us? "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith; and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely is expressed in the homily of justification." Christ Jesus is consequently the sole object of our reliance, the only Being through whose merits and intercession, we anticipate the gift of eternal life.

Strictly speaking faith itself is far from meritorious. It does not include the principle of our redemption. It is not the original cause of our reconciliation with God. It can do no more than enable us to lay hold on the precious promises made us through Christ. He alone constitutes our hope, and joy, and crown of rejoicing. He alone, through his unsinning obedience, his incarnation, sufferings, and death; he alone deserves and enjoys with us the high honour of being "the way, the truth, and the life," "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." This is our estimate of him; this our construction of the conditional efficacy of faith; for this, we pronounce "justification by faith only" to be "a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort." Inasmuch, that to yield it up would impair a material feature, which distinguishes the covenant of grace; a feature through which, our frail and imperfect services, when proceeding out of a true penitent heart and lively faith, are mercifully accepted in lieu of that strict undeviating performance of the divine will, which it is, both naturally and morally, impossible for us to accomplish. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

I am indeed free to assert, that were it even practicable for us to lead a perfectly pure and sinless life, nothing but the most monstrous arrogance could ever induce us to claim the never ending rewards of heaven, as a matter of right, justly accruing to us, for the exemplary holiness of perhaps an hour, a day, or at most, a few years. The disparity would be too great; the disproportion between the thing claimed and the thing performed far too obvious to be reconciled even with our own notions of retributive justice; and therefore we should not hesitate a single moment in arriving at the conclusion distinctly avowed in the epistle to the Ephesians, "By grace are ye saved, through faith: and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

Less than this, reason itself should not fail to teach, and the Church does not speak more loftily. She recommends not to her members the deplorable predicament of "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness." She knows very well, that "without faith it is impossible to please God." She is thoroughly persuaded, that if her clergy were to surrender so essential a part of the Christian doctrine, they might as well throw aside their bibles, as well sever the thread of accountability, and cease to urge upon your hopes and fears the bliss of heaven, and the pains of hell. Hear her own deliberate opinion embracing the case of the impenitent and unbelieving; "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the school-authors say) deserve grace of congruity: yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin."

Neither let any man doubt it, who is able to trace effects to their causes; who is capable of appreciating works by the motives, which produce them. Let him rather reflect, that actions precisely similar to the eye, like donations to the poor for example, may yet proceed from very different views; and that although we are unable to distinguish the evil from the good, Omniscient wisdom is still sure to penetrate the secret impulses of the soul, and determine at a glance, which results from mere ostentation, and which from a truly liberal and charitable spirit. "For the Lord seeth not as

man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." A circumstance evincing the necessity of connecting good motives with all our apparently good actions, and that satisfactorily explains the preceding article of the Church, in accordance with both reason and scripture. For wherever the intention is bad, our conduct will not bear the scrutiny of the All-seeing eye. Wherever we are destitute of the faith in Jesus exacted in the scriptures, there we may be certain of displeasing God, there the seemingly fairest virtues will spring from worldly maxims and prove of no avail at the judgment day of Him, who hath said, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

And yet, Brethren, our Church embraces no crude and barren faith. She is no promoter of antinomian principles. She denies not the "faithful saying" of St. Paul, "These things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men." Her sentiments on the contrary are worthy of her origin. They are practical and sound, alike removed from laxity of morals, and the unproductive cry of Lord, Lord. You shall judge for yourselves; "Albeit that good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith; insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known, as a tree discerned by the fruit."

How excellent in principle! How admirably adapted in practice, to promote the interests and ensure the welfare of society! Let Christians cherish such sentiments; let these control the conduct of life, and no more will religion be wounded by the hands of its professed friends, no more will the proverbial outcry to the prejudice of morality cause the worldling to suspect their integrity. You here perceive the true foundation, upon which the superstructure of good works must be erected. They possess no abstract merit, and they must be associated with the faith of Christ. "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." "Yea; a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works

show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God: thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" They are the best evidence we can obtain of our recovery from the bondage of sin to the liberty of the sons of God. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." They are an undoubted standard, by which we may prove our own selves, and safely determine, that we have not believed in vain, provided love to God and love to our neighbour have thoroughly pervaded the heart, and meliorated its otherwise selfish and unruly passions.

Others may fondly imagine their conversion to have been the work of a moment. They may principally credit it, from the idea of being able to point out the precise instant of its operation upon their passive souls, little heeding the memorable remark to the master in Israel, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit!" But without entering upon these subtleties, let us be content with a safer and better guide, than that, which may finally prove to be the day-dream of a wild and disordered mind. Let us only feel, that we have made our peace with God, when we experience that the fruits of peace unto holiness are exemplified in the practical piety and benevolence of our lives.

I know how prevalent the idea is, that religion is easily obtained. I know that with many, the presumptuous sinner of to-day is by no means incapacitated from becoming the holy saint of to-morrow. I also know, that, for rejecting such doctrines, our Church and her ministers are regarded with a jealous eye, and inveighed against as possessing the form of godliness, without the power thereof. But while we are constant in the belief, and happy in the conviction, that all men may partake of that grace of God, which bringeth salvation, yet are we decidedly of opinion, that vigorous personal efforts are previously requisite, in order to obtain the victory over the corrupt passions and propensities of our nature. Prayer is essential; secret, ardent, and persevering prayer. But how arduous is the duty to unpractised lips, and minds unlettered in the knowledge of God. Faith is essential. But how is it to be secured at a moment's warning, with scarcely a prior thought bestowed

and upon the evidence, on which rests the credibility of the gospel. Repentance is essential. But what confidence is to be placed in that repentance, which is yet to be tested by a complete reformation of life and manners.

There is indeed a mode of obviating all these objections. It is easy to resort to certain imaginary decrees, and, reposing full confidence in them, to draw largely and expeditiously upon the power and influence of irresistible and all-conquering grace. But then what becomes of the admonition, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able;" with innumerable others, clearly intimating the formidable impediments to the way everlasting, which the sinner encounters in the depravity of his nature, and its inveterate attachment to the idols of this world? Amid all the odium undeservedly cast upon our communion, I do verily believe, that we demand far higher evidence of the soul's conversion, than most of our accusers. They often appear to be satisfied with the sighs and tears, the repentance, prayers, and faith of a day. The related experience of an hour is by no means an uncommon criterion, through which they are ready to welcome the returning prodigal, as a new creature in Christ Jesus. But we are apprehensive, that these impressions may pass away, as the morning cloud and the early dew. We are confident, that a life of holiness is the only legitimate evidence of our having actually taken up the cross of Christ, and followed him in the regeneration.

To be plain, Brethren, we are doubtful of sudden conversions. We fear, that the feelings are more excited, and the imagination inflamed, than the judgment convinced or the heart purified. It is not, that we dislike revivals of religion. Every faithful minister of Jesus fervently prays, that the hearts of all men may bow before the golden sceptre of Immanuel. It is not, that we hesitate to receive the ever to be remembered scripture, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." By us, it is embraced without the slightest reservation, and considered as demanding the new birth, as an invariable prerequisite to the attainment of the kingdom of heaven.

But are we charged with excessive languor and apathy in the good cause of Christ? Is our religion questioned, and our Church pronounced unfavourable to its growth, because we do not after

long intervals flock in troops to the Redeemer's standard! I shall be exculpated in your eyes, if, with decorum and a charitable spirit, I repel the imputations, with such considerations as these: We cannot, with the view of producing a general excitement, adopt any expedients unknown to the scriptures, and unauthorized by the practice of Christ and his Apostles. Equally opposed to precipitation on the one hand, and to procrastination on the other, we cannot avoid recommending, that, in the most important transaction of this life, the greatest care should be taken, that our resolutions are deliberately formed, our principles clearly understood, our motives fairly canvassed, our affections deeply engaged, and our hearts firmly set upon witnessing a good confession before God and man.

Persuaded, that the operations of the Spirit are gradual and not instantaneous, we make a material distinction between convictions of sin, and the actual passage from death unto life. So that, if large numbers, within a short period and with little previous reflection, were to present themselves in order to partake of the bread, which we break, and of the cup of blessing, which we bless; it would be felt, that many had probably mistaken the commencement for the consummation of grace. We should not doubt their sincerity. We should consider them perfectly honest and conscientious, alive to their dearest interests, and convinced of having obtained the one thing needful.

But pass some few months, and in our opinion, the religion of those, who together commenced the race of glory, and honour, and immortality, with the like fair and brilliant prospects, would exhibit a widely variant and discordant aspect. Some of them would have cherished their first impressions. They would have made diligent use of all the various means of grace, and in this way ensuring the divine blessing upon them, they would have gradually perfected the work, already supposed to have been finished. Others however would have lost their first love. They would have relaxed by little and little from their original zeal, and at length perceiving their religious duties to become more and more irksome, they would either have abandoned them under the idea of their having been self-deluded; or else have consoled themselves with the flattering doctrine of their final perseverance.

Our opinion is, that in all such cases there is no period, at the time of making a publick profession of faith in Christ, nothing more than sudden and violent convictions of sin; that those convictions may or may not prove the harbingers of ultimate conversion; but let them eventuate as they may, that the first class will always look back to this period, as the epoch of their regeneration, and the second be considered by their friends to have been grossly, though unintentionally deceived. We cannot therefore encourage such a precipitate union with the Church of Christ. When connected with the favourite system from which it springs, it reminds us of the oracles of Greece, so ambiguous in their predictions, as in no event to incur the slightest danger of remaining unfulfilled. The steadfastness of the one set of converts is accounted for, on the principle of their having been really born again; the apostacy of the other, on the ground of having mistaken the nature of their spiritual experience. The whole theory is consequently constructed in so ingenious a manner, so admirably adapted to any sequel, that it is almost impossible to convince them of its fallacy. They who do not fall away are firm believers in instantaneous regeneration; some of those, who do, are unwilling to abandon it in the hope that their delinquency is but temporary, and the residue are left to acknowledge, that they never were converted.

I do not wonder that the best and most intelligent divines, among our dissenting brethren, are beginning to detect and expose the unhappy delusion. No one will question the competency of Dr. Mason, whom I have before quoted, to form an accurate opinion upon the subject. His language is peculiarly striking, and I cannot resist the inclination to transcribe it. According to him; "Some, in fine, think that religious experience is the sole test of admission into the Church, provided a man can satisfy them of his conversion, (and they are not always **HARD** to be satisfied;) if he can relate a plausible story of his feelings, can talk of his distress and of his comfort, and has learnt to deal in joys and ecstasies, it is enough. How he came by his experience, he probably cannot tell, and his spiritual guides often omit to ask. And yet this is often the point, upon which turns the discrimination between true and false religion; between rational experience and fanaticism; between good influences of the Spirit of God, and their counterfeits. It is lamentable, that so **LARGE** a proportion of conversions, which are the fruit of

tumultuous meetings, and the theme of NEWSPAPER praise, prove to be of this class. Dark views, gross ignorance, and even flat contradictions in the simplest truths of Christianity, are no obstacle. Thousands go from sin to God from nature to grace: from condemnation to pardon: from despondency to rapture: and when interrogated about the process by which this marvellous transition was accomplished, have little or nothing to say, but that THEY HAVE FELT so. And what is still more astonishing, they have been translated from darkness to light without being illuminated! For the uttering of incoherent exclamation, and the chattering over a set of phrases, though accompanied with vehement passions, with shrieks, and fallings, and faintings, and fits, and trances, must not pass for divine illumination, nor divine influence of any sort. When we consider the mechanism of the human affections, and how rapidly emotion is propagated BY SYMPATHY through promiscuous crowds, we can explain all the phenomena, which in this matter have lately attracted the publick wonder, without recourse to supernatural agency: and must be convinced that nothing can be more precarious, than the tenure by which these SUDDEN CONVERTS hold their profession."

Nor let it be thought, that the sentiments of this celebrated preacher, are perfectly detached and isolated. Dr. Beecher, a no less celebrated and able congregational divine, has borne an equally decided testimony, in his remarks upon some late extraordinary revivals in the presbyterian Churches of New-York. He has reduced his observations to several heads, and upon this, "The HASTY recognition of persons as converted, upon their own judgment, without interrogation or evidence," he thus writes, "Revivals may become so great and rapid, as to make it proper that those experiencing a change, IN THE COURSE OF A DAY, should meet in one place, not to be recognised as CONVERTS, but to be examined, cautioned, and instructed: for the more powerful and rapid is the work of grace in a community, the more certain is the existence of SYMPATHY and all the causes of SELF-DECEPTION; and the more imperious the necessity of caution, unless we would replenish the Church with HYPOCRITES, to keep her agitated by discipline, or covered with shame by the neglect of it."

The writer's opinions are the more valuable, because he is an ardent promoter of temperate and judicious revivals; but for those of a

wild, inflammable description, he has no respect, he is satisfied of their having in some degree acquired that complexion among his presbyterian friends. and after many admirable thoughts, draws towards a conclusion in these forcible terms; "I have only to add that all the evil may, with perfect ease be avoided, without diminishing the true spirit and power of a revival; but in every respect shall increase it. There is no need of praying as if God and man were dead, or of wallowing on the floor, and frothing at the mouth, as if filled with hydrophobia, instead of the Spirit of God; nor any harm in kindness and gentleness, nor any benefit in harsh and severe epithets. The state of man may be explained to him so that he shall believe and feel, better than by calling him a devil, a viper, or a serpent. There may be as great directness as is needed, or as is possible without indecorum, and the gospel may be preached faithfully and attended with the power of God, without GROANING in prayer and crying "AMEN," and without FEMALE prayers and exhortations, and without that spiritual PRIDE, which never fails to attend pressing the mass of the community out of their places, and shaking together in one chaldron of effervescence all the passions of all the classes in human society." And again, "Dear Brethren in Christ; you must not, for a moment suppose that I do not fervently love you; or that I ascribe to you in extenso, all the defects to which I have alluded. But that I have drawn the outlines of a moral chart, which such a disastrous revival as your present course could not fail to lead to, would amply fill up, I have not a doubt."

Such then, Brethren, are the opinions of two of the strongest men to be found in the dissenting Churches, in regard to the excesses committed under the guise of religion. The opinions themselves I do not hesitate to approve. The language in which they are expressed may be objectionable, and I do not propose to become responsible either for its sarcasm or its caustick severity. But certainly from the enemies of the Church, I have the same right to avail myself of self accusing concessions, that the conqueror has to wield the weapons of a vanquished foe; and I desire no more convincing evidence to sustain the views entertained by us, in relation to the extravagancies, which have become extremely prevalent under the popular and imposing name of revivals. I have not that confidence in them, which I should have, if they were more sober, enlightened, and durable: if the soul was not stormed through the

imagination; if the heart was not supposed to be quickened in a moment, and the full-grown saint manufactured, in the twinkling of an eye, out of the votary of the world, the veteran in guilt, and of course, the ignoramus in divinity.

But I will not stoop to the language of invective. Our Christian Brethren, so far as we are concerned, have an undoubted right to follow the dictates of their own judgment, and sincerely do I rejoice, whenever their labours are attended with the salvation of immortal souls. My object is purely defensive. It is to justify the Church for pursuing what we claim the privilege of believing to be a more scriptural mode of instruction; and although it must be acknowledged to enlist in its favour far less excitement and enthusiasm: yet is it to be seriously borne in mind, that while the murmuring of the rivulet is heard, the deep majestick stream glides in peace and quietness to its ocean home. And long may it continue to flow and fertilize with its waters the vineyard of the Lord. Even from the summary sketch I have drawn, of the more important articles of our faith, you must be convinced, that purer doctrines were never embodied from the inspired volume, and that we have abundant reason to characterize them, as "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

Never then, let us surrender them in compliance with the errors and prejudices of others. They were adopted with the utmost deliberation, when our American became a distinct branch of the holy Apostolick Church, and by a convention, that understood their import precisely as they have been interpreted in your hearing. A circumstance, that evidently exonerates us from the stigma of inconsistency, to which I have before alluded. For had they countenanced a single ingredient in the poisoned chalice of Calvinism, it would have been expunged. Had it been deemed practicable to have improved them in any one particular, the time was favourable, the ability ample, and the authority undoubted. But no improvement could be suggested; they were preserved unbroken and entire; and still continuing to receive the approbation of our minds and consciences, they bid fair to be the true faith of Churchmen to the end of time.

I will only subjoin my fervent prayer to God, that to the extent of our day and generation, our talents and resources of every description, we may be included within the number. They will ena-

let us to shun all those ill concealed rocks of heresy and schism upon which so many immortal souls have made everlasting shipwreck of their faith and holiness. The brilliant lamp of their salvation will guide us in peace and safety to our journey's end. And when at last we are called upon to exchange the Church militant, for the Church triumphant, it will be seen, in the presence of an assembled throng of angels, ready to bear us on exulting wing to the heavenly mansions; it will be seen, that, compiled in undeviating conformity to the doctrines, which are according to godliness, they have materially contributed to work out for us an "exceeding and eternal weight of glory." AMEN.

SERMON XVII.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

THERE is yet remaining one doctrine of the Church, to which upon reflection I have concluded, Brethren, to direct your attention. It is not, that its belief is absolutely essential to the Christian character. It is not, but that many precious souls will hereafter enjoy the blessedness of those, whose sins are forgiven, who shall have existed here below perfectly ignorant of its nature, and therefore deprived of the capacity to yield to the biblical evidence upon which it is founded. But the doctrine is interesting in itself, and requires to be known; the Church is sometimes rudely assailed for admitting it into the articles of her belief; and it certainly contradicts one of the most common and popular errors prevailing in the age and country, in which we live.

From their youth up, the great body of the people are taught to believe, that immediately after death the departed soul either ascends to heaven or descends to hell; and never have I witnessed

more surprise, than when the idea has been opposed, as entirely groundless and untenable. We are at once suspected of consigning the spirits of the dead to a temporary oblivion, or perhaps the purgatory of the catholick is suggested to the mind of the hearer, and he trembles lest the grossness of that fantasy should be attempted to be palmed upon his understanding. But no such thing! We reject both the one and the other. As in every particular to which I have already adverted, here also we build upon the sure foundation of holy oracles, and are only astonished at the extraordinary facility, with which one of their most obvious intimations is usually overlooked.

I will explain myself at large. Twice on each revolving sabbath we are accustomed to express our belief in the affirmation of the creed, commonly called the Apostle's, respecting our Lord Jesus Christ, that "he descended into hell;" while the third article of our religion is conceived in these terms, "As Christ died for us, and was buried; so also is it to be believed, that he went down into hell." Are these expressions then to be interpreted in a figurative or a literal sense? Are they to be considered as describing an event, and designating a place, which exist only in the regions of fancy, or such solemn and serious truths, as are worthy of all acceptance? I answer, that they are to be interpreted literally. I answer, that when we affirm of the blessed Jesus, that "he descended into hell," we refer to the actual flight and residence of his soul, during the period of its separation from his disanimated body.

Not however, that we give the slightest countenance to the horrible idea of his visiting the place of torment, and there enduring the agonies of the second death. For what concord has Christ with Belial, that he should enter the infernal pit? Or how could we then understand the declaration made to the thief upon the Cross; "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise?"²² Paradise, which is a term indicative of pleasure and not of pain, of reward and not of punishment. No, no, when the Saviour of sinners, at the closing scene of his mortal life, cried out, "It is finished;" when "he bowed the head and gave up the ghost;" then was fully accomplished the entire aggregate of mental and corporeal agony, he was content to endure, and all was peace, and happiness, and joy.

He indeed "descended into hell;" but we are to remember, that this sentence concludes with a word of Saxon derivation. A word,

that instead of implying, as it now does, the reverse of heaven, originally imported no more than the "Inferi" of the Latins, and the "Hades" of the Greeks; that is, in our English tongue, and as explained in the rubrick before the creed, "the place of departed spirits." In this sense, and in this alone, do we there use it; and although its more modern signification may induce some scruples of conscience in the uninformed, the same observation applies to no less than eleven passages of the new testament; wherever indeed the original word is "hades," and not "geenna;" both of which are translated "hell," in the received version; but while the latter indicates the place of eternal misery, the former merely denotes the intermediate state of the soul after death, and prior to the general judgment. It includes the Elysium and the Tartarus of the poets, and is sufficiently delineated in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus to convince us, that it is divided into two separate mansions; the one being a common receptacle for the souls of the righteous; the other, for those of "the ungodly and the sinner."

So that, when the Church by the adoption of the creed, and by the doctrine of her third article, maintains the actual descent of Christ into hell, she only coincides with all Christian antiquity, and I may add with almost all protestant divines of any repute, in the belief, that his soul was transmitted to Abraham's bosom, or to that paradise of God, where the spirits of the righteous exist in the full assurance of a final reunion with their slumbering dust, and a subsequent ascension into the abodes of perennial felicity. The Church coincides with these and not these alone; since the same doctrine is clearly and satisfactorily deduced from several passages of the sacred volume.

I have already mentioned one, which affords irresistible evidence of its truth. For when our Saviour addressed the penitent thief with the inspiring promise, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise;" he could not possibly allude to heaven in the highest sense, because, upon his resurrection, he declared to Mary Magdalen, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." To what other region then, could he have accompanied his fellow sufferer, immediately after death, and previous to his return to life again? I know of none, unless we admit the doctrine of an intermediate state for the temporary reception of disembodied spirits.

This doctrine is farther corroborated by the testimony of St. Peter, where he affirms of Christ, that he "hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison." Spirits, that were not in heaven, because heaven is never characterized as a prison. Spirits, that were not in an ultimate hell, because the light of the gospel, and the preaching of the cross, can never penetrate the everlasting abodes of darkness and despair. But only acknowledge the existence of the paradise contended for, and we immediately discern the propriety of announcing to the spirits of those just men, who died previous to the crucifixion of Christ, that the great work of their redemption was at length completely accomplished; that he had liquidated the wages of sin, and ensured their eventual enjoyment of the kingdom of glory.

There is also a remarkable passage in the second chapter of the Acts, which abundantly verifies the doctrine in question. In the course of his address to the men of Israel, the Apostle Peter quotes this prophecy from the sixteenth psalm, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." He quotes it, with the express reservation, that the patriarch David "Spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption." All which was gloriously fulfilled in the stupendous miracle of his rising from the dead; when his soul and body separated from each other, by the crucifixion, were once more united; once more fully recognised by his faithful adherents, and until the period of his ascension into heaven employed as usual, in instructing them in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Although he had been put to death in the flesh, he was quick in the Spirit, and went and preached to the spirits in prison; but his soul was not left in hell, it did not remain in paradise with the soul of the penitent thief; and if not left, then it must have been there anterior to the resurrection. Although his crucified body was taken down from the cross, and entombed in the sepulchre of Joseph of Arimathea, yet was it raised from the dead by the power of God, and therefore his flesh did not see corruption.

So far indeed as it relates to the human body of Christ, all Christians concur in the uniform testimony of the evangelists, that as it

rested in hope, so it was raised in glory; as it was consigned to the elements of the tomb a breathless corpse, so after three days it was made alive again, without experiencing the decomposing influence of the grave. And if they can furnish another explanation of the place, where in the interim his soul resided; a place, in which it was not LEFT, and that is evidently described by the Apostle, as equally UNSUITED to it: prolonged alone as was the grave to that of his body, and consequently it could not be heaven; I am content to listen to their argument, and if it does not prove better than I anticipate, to refute it with the utmost ease.

For this purpose, I could now adduce many other passages of similar import to the preceding, profusely scattered throughout the gospels and epistles, but inasmuch as these already produced sufficiently authenticate the proposition, that "As Christ died for us, and was buried; so also is it to be believed, that he went down into hell;" I shall proceed to some few remarks, that are more immediately connected with the concerns of the living.

And certainly the view I have taken destroys the almost insupportable idea of a temporary annihilation of our existence. It convinces us, that if Christ went and preached to the spirits of the departed, there is an appropriate residence, no matter where, for every soul of man, between the hour of his dissolution, and the day of judgment; that we shall not then become to "dumb forgetfulness a prey;" but rather experience in our nobler nature still greater powers of intellection than we now enjoy. I acknowledge however, that this is far from being a source of consolation to those, who are living without God in the world, and who have every reason to prefer the slumber of ages to an immediate communion with the rich man in the intervening state of partial torment. But what righteous man is there, believing in a general resurrection and a general judgment; believing that body and soul must be reunited, before an entrance can be ministered unto him abundantly into the everlasting presence of his heavenly Father; what righteous man is there, who under these circumstances will not rejoice in the scriptural assurance of a place, adapted to the separate existence of his soul, and replete with enjoyments of no ordinary description?

Remember, that he will there be associated with the pious friends and relatives, whom he tenderly loved in this vale of tears. He will there commence his communion and fellowship with the saints

at every age, with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, with the blessed company of the Apostles, and the noble army of martyrs. He will there anticipate with them the full fruition of bliss, which shall succeed the second coming of our Lord, with all his holy angels with him, to judge the world in righteousness. And is not this far better, than a state of dreamless repose and unconscious oblivion? Is it not far better, to live in paradise surrounded with congenial spirits, than to endure, for an indefinite period, a total suspension of all the active powers of the mind, and all the philanthropick affections of the heart?

Surely, Brethren, it was with the design of encouraging us to run with patience the race set before us, that our Saviour said, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." And yet, forasmuch as the rewards of heaven can only be obtained after the resurrection of those, who die in the Lord, if there be no intermediate mansion of departed and rejoicing spirits, the soul is as effectually destroyed by death as the body, and will only revive with it, only live, when it shall forever relinquish the bondage of the grave. The whole of which is manifestly opposed to the consolation offered by Him, who knew all things, to his persecuted followers; and is moreover directly subversive of the expectations entertained by the holy Apostle, when he looked forward with rapture to the day of his death; when he ardently longed to depart and be with Christ, to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. Well then may the believer in these remoter ages rely upon a like glorious change; well may he refuse to despond under the dismal apprehension, that his soul shall sleep with the body the oblivious sleep of death, however temporary. It is rather released from this state of sin and sorrow, for other and nobler purposes. It is released from its mortal companion, in order to be carried by angels into Abraham's bosom, where it will exist in the transporting hope of future glory, and under the all pervading consciousness, that "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

There is besides, another aspect, in which the subject presents itself in a most persuasive and practical manner. For the moment we accede to the continued existence of departed spirits, we necessarily invest them with all the mental powers, which they exhibited in the course of their earthly probation. They can reason

and reflect. They can call up to remembrance past events, and communicate their thoughts each to the other, with perhaps more than their wonted facility while here below. And what must be the consequence? Every thing that transpires on earth is known to them; not by immediate inspection; not that I confide in the rhetorical flourish, through which the souls of the dead are represented to be continually hovering over the places which once knew them. But death is ever removing his victims here and there from this transient life. Spirit after spirit is perpetually hastening to the world of spirits, and when arrived within its confines, possessed of memory, and reason, and the capacity of imparting knowledge; Is it credible, that they should remain perversely silent and incommunicative of the transactions of this world? As well might we deny, that the human soul of Christ preached to the spirits in prison; as well contend, that the whole parable is spurious, which minutely details the conversation occurring between the rich man, and the father of the faithful. Since both are in strict accordance with the principle I have suggested, and both are evidently supposititious, unless spirit can communicate to spirit every particle of intelligence it has previously acquired. On the contrary by admitting their genuineness, we are forced to concede, that as Christ announced his triumphs upon the cross to the inmates of paradise, and as the rich man is represented, relating to Abraham the precise situation of his five brethren remaining within the precincts of time; so every recently departed soul is empowered to impart to the souls, with whom it is destined to associate, an accurate account of whatever passed within its personal cognizance in the land of the dying.

How easy then to develop the practical benefits which may result from this imposing and scriptural view of the subject. Too many of our race; too many perchance of this very audience, are far more disposed to fear man than the Maker of man. They can readily indulge the corrupt propensities of our nature, notwithstanding the Omniscient eye is continually upon them, spying out all their ways, and still entirely refrain in the presence of friends and relatives, whose religious feelings they respect, and whose good opinions they are anxious to retain.

But in process of time, those friends, those relatives, whose piety operated as a salutary restraint upon their conduct in life, are sum-

moned to that bourn from which no traveller returns, and then the impatient sinner too often rushes with avidity into the broad road, which leadeth to destruction. The fear of God, and the certainty of his overruling providence are scarcely ever permitted to cross his morbid mind, and as for man, unless possessed of some colour of right in virtue of the ties of affinity, he alike braves his censure, and disdains his applause.

But only allow the doctrine, which I am anxious to inculcate, only allow this to become the settled persuasion of his mind, and what inestimable benefits might not directly follow in its train. Imagine that he has been deprived of an affectionate and pious parent. Of one, whom he both loved and feared, and whose loss he could not but sincerely lament. Instead of absolutely burying all parental authority in the dust before him, this doctrine awakens new and peradventure more lively impressions, than he ever before experienced. He represents to himself his beloved relative in the preparatory abode of blessedness, and not only so, not only enjoying its incipient state of triumph and glory; but as regularly apprized, by those of his acquaintance, who successively yield to the summons of death, of the identical manner in which he employs the few moments allotted him to prepare for eternity.

If therefore he sincerely venerates the memory of the pious dead, will he not exult in pursuing a course of conduct, which being communicated, would cause the living spirit to rejoice, as the angels are said to rejoice over one sinner that repenteth? Or, if he revered his parent with a truly filial fear, while a resident in time, would he not earnestly endeavour to avoid all such offences, as would grieve his sainted spirit, as the spirit of God is described to be grieved, in witnessing the contradiction of sinners? I appeal, Brethren, to your individual consciences, and am bold to assert, that under the circumstances, which have been recited, that man would be vile amongst the vile, who could continue utterly regardless of the light in which his actions would be viewed in paradise, by the once dearest object of his affections: The once fond, indulgent parent, who longs even in that blissful region to hear of those personal attainments in religion, which shall at length produce a happy reunion, where there are neither tears to shed, nor parting benedictions to pronounce.

There is also another feature in this survey, which nothing but the sense of duty could ever induce me to bring up to your reflections. We have most of us experienced the melancholy bereavement of the friends and relatives we loved, and fondly do we cherish the hope that they are now rejoicing in the intermediate state of happiness. It is possible however, that we may hereafter find ourselves mistaken. I may be mistaken with regard to one, who was most dear to my heart, and so may either of your number in relation to your equally beloved kindred. They may be on the fatal side of the impassable gulf, and yet being fully certified of our present character in the sight of heaven, through the same medium to which I have called your attention: What are their feelings towards us? What the line of conduct, they would have us pursue?

Believe me, Brethren, they would only hear of our acceptance of the overtures of the gospel. They would only hear, that we had become the humble followers of the cross of Christ. Believe me, and not me alone, since the scriptures are as full and convincing upon the matter, as it is possible to conceive of. I once more allude to the case of the rich man, and am indifferent whether you consider the narrative an allegory or not; inasmuch as it cannot be less than a representation of what does take place, and therefore it settles in either event the only principle, that is worth debating.

Listen then to the words, which he is described as uttering, being in torment. They are addressed to Abraham, and are couched in the once despised language of prayer; "I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him" that is Lazarus, "to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment." Memory then was his; affection, his; the power to communicate, his; and when I have remarked to you, that he seems to have utterly renounced the now proverbial fact, that misery loves company; the lucid and momentous character of the incidents unfolded renders all other comment superfluous. They completely establish the knowledge, which the spirits of the dead have of the affairs of the living. They plainly evince, that however happy our own departed and beloved relatives may be in the society of Abraham, the wretched Dives is not the only being, who would gladly send a messenger to prevail with impenitent sinners to flee from the wrath to come. But alas, "If they

hear not Moses and the prophets," Christ and the Apostles, "neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

Such therefore, Brethren, is the practical use, to which I would subject the principal argument of this discourse. Some of us may have little regard for the exalted Being, most worthy of continual love, and reverence, and fear; little regard, for the very reason, that he never was, and never can be corporeally present to our senses. But we have stood in awe of those, whose spirits are now, as we trust, rejoicing in hope, or dreadful to think, trembling in agony; and let us govern our future lives by the conviction, that they are perfectly acquainted with the respective parts we are acting in this fleeting show, and, whatever may have been their previous solicitudes, that they are now universally desirous of learning our actual transition from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. Let us govern ourselves by this conviction, for it may bring us to our senses in relation to the great Jehovah himself. It may teach us to fear Him, who can destroy and make alive. And then the great object of our existence will be accomplished. We shall be renewed in the spirit of our minds, and although our bodies must necessarily see corruption, our better souls will go where Christ has gone before us.

In drawing to a conclusion, I must not however fail to remind you, that the prevailing error, of departed souls being forthwith consigned to an ultimate heaven or hell, is not only at variance with those scriptures, which inculcate the existence of an intermediate state; but with many others, utterly incapable of being tortured into harmony with it. If for example, there were any spirits of just men already entered into their everlasting rest, we might be certain of the present heavenly felicity of the man after God's own heart. But what says the Apostle, in relation to his body, about which there is no controversy? "Men and Brethren, let me freely speak to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day." What in relation to his soul? "David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord saith unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool."

If it were not a mere illusion; it would also seem that the spirits of the righteous dead must enjoy the felicity of beholding the glorified body of their ascended Redeemer face to face. But the Apos-

He evidently refers this gratifying circumstance to his second coming, addressing the faithful in this manner, "When Christ, who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." He does not intimate that they would be with him before, nor, when the holy angels are introduced as attending him on the day, that in his glorious majesty he shall come to judge the quick and the dead, does it appear that the souls of the saints are to bear them company in their flight from the heavenly world. On the contrary, every thing revealed, concerning the resurrection of the dead and the great and terrible day of judgment, clearly indicates that these events must precede the recognition of Christ by believers, and the bestowment of his rewards upon them. These are his own words foretelling this consequence of the coming of the Son of Man, "Then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven." And again, "Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."

Whereas the error I am combating involves the monstrous absurdity of a previous entrance into heaven, and a previous enjoyment of its rewards. It even supposes the souls of the righteous to come out from its blissful courts, and of course those of the unrighteous from their dreadful abyss, in order to be reunited to their respective bodies, and listen to sentences already executed; "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation the world." "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." But the doctrine of an intermediate state harmonizes with all these events, it corresponds with the idea of a general judgment, and agrees with the memorable declaration of Paul to the Thessalonians; "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Nor is it justly liable to any objection. When for instance, the same Apostle expresses himself as "willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord," it does not necessarily imply a personal interview immediately succeeding his death. For if while Christ's disciples continue in this sinful state, he could promise and say, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world;" much more will he be spiritually, though not corporeally, present with them in the blessed mansions of paradise. Those mansions, where the soul of Lazarus is represented to have been carried by the angels, and where Abraham is described as the principal personage, which could not have been true, had it been designed to convey the idea of heaven; the heaven, where Christ was, and to whom, in this case, the rich man would have addressed himself rather than to a created intelligence. But according to the true construction, with great propriety is he spoken of, as pleading with the father of the faithful, and from him receiving the answers, which so thoroughly baffled all his hopes, whether relating to himself, or to the kindred he had left behind.

Let it also be remembered, that our views upon this subject materially vary from the Roman catholick notion of a purgatory. For the papists arrange departed souls into three distinct classes: One of which, being completely cleansed from all the defilements contracted in this life, ascend immediately to heaven: Another, dying impenitent and guilty of mortal sins, are as quickly cast into hell: While the third, all of whom are eventually to be received up into glory, first require to be purified from some venial sins, not sufficiently repented of here below; and therefore the purgatory to which they are doomed for an indefinite period; therefore the masses catholicks repeat for the repose of the dead, and their speedy enlargement, from a punitive prison, to the house not made with hands, which is eternal in the heavens. All this however, we are compelled to reject as a mere fiction, unfounded in the scriptures, and diametrically opposed to the doctrine, which they deliver, describing this life as the only state of probation; requiring of every man to be here cleansed from all unrighteousness, and to become pure as God is pure, holy as God is holy; and determining the future irreversible doom of all, in this emphatick language, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still."

Finally, Brethren, I have to suggest, that the doctrine of an intermediate state should not be discarded on the ground of novelty, as it is peculiar to no age or country, nor to any protestant denomination. It is rather maintained by all the great divines of our Church, from the time of Cranmer, to that of Horsley, and notwithstanding the popular opinion upon which I have animadverted, our learned dissenting brethren have not been averse from defending its scriptural authority, as may be seen in the writings of Doddridge, Watts, Campbell, and M'Knight of the presbyterian Church, and Wesley, and Adam Clarke of the methodist, with many others. There are indeed few truths contained in the sacred volume susceptible of clearer demonstration. Let us therefore unitedly bless the Lord our God, for the paradise he has been pleased to prepare for the disembodied souls of the righteous; and under the soothing conviction, that they are not to be consigned to a state of unconscious oblivion, in the interval between death and the resurrection, let us devoutly adopt the language of the sweet singer of Israel, and say, "Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward; they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I could declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered." AMEN.

SERMON XVIII.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

IN strict conformity with the vow or declaration recorded in the text, I have endeavoured, Brethren, to present you with a compendious view of the principal features of our venerable Church. Having made the vow my own, you must judge of the facts and arguments, which it has elicited. whether they have been true or

false, strong or weak; whether I have or have not succeeded in giving a satisfactory account of our government and ministry, our institutions and worship, our leading doctrines and articles of religion. Forbearance has been long exercised. Controversy of every description has been studiously avoided, and nothing but the most solemn sense of duty could have induced me to deviate from a course persisted in for years, and having for its foundation a sincere desire to "live peaceably with all men."

But while that desire is not in the slightest degree impaired; while fully sensible that the servant of Jesus must not strive, I have yet dared to appear in defence of the truth; I have yet dared, for Zion and Jerusalem's sake, to expose myself to the animadversions I would fain deprecate. Not therefore in the spirit of chivalry; not that I would gladly break a lance with any of our opposers in some hard fought field of theology. For if the Apostle has exhorted all Christians in these terms, "Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment;" you may easily conceive, that the Christian minister must feel no inconsiderable share of regret at the necessity, which is frequently imposed upon him, of inculcating again and again the true scriptural views of these great and important topics: Regret owing to the existence of many gross and dangerous errors, and because of the collisions to which it unavoidably subjects him.

For even upon these elementary principles, the clergy of the Church will find some one denomination or other to differ, and none, that entirely concur with her in sentiment. Many persons there are to assert the intrinsic merit of good works. The anabaptist contests the validity of infant baptism, and is equally adverse to sprinkling or affusion. The presbyterian, congregational, and most, if not all other protestant sects, are opposed to the laying on of hands in confirmation. Upon the subject of the resurrection of the dead, we have not only to combat the infidel, but unhappily nominal Christians of every Church, who, if they do not absolutely disavow its certainty, are nevertheless extremely indifferent to its ulterior consequences. And then in relation to an eternal judgment, it is well known that the universalist professes an ardent attachment to

the theory of final felicity; to the eventual reception of the vilest sinner into mansions of imperishable glory.

It is therefore with unfeigned sorrow, that we are often forced to maintain "the first principles of the oracles of God," rather than continually beseech you to "go on unto perfection," as if thoroughly persuaded, that every professed believer was "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," by acknowledging, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." On the contrary, new sources of variance are perpetually unfolding themselves. When we administer the symbolized body and blood of Christ, we come in contact with the quaker, who rejects the visible celebration of this sacrament. When we invoke the influences of the Holy Spirit, and rely upon one Lord and one mediator between God and man; we are called in question by the unitarian, denying to the former all personality, and to the latter his eternal Sonship and Divinity.

And still, Brethren, surrounded as we are on every side, by these elements of hostility, there is nevertheless one consoling circumstance through which the picture I have drawn is in a great measure deprived of its gloomy and revolting features, so far at least as the personal feelings of Churchmen are concerned. Strange and paradoxical then, as it may appear to persons unaccustomed to an accurate analysis of systems, it is notwithstanding strictly true, that upon almost every principle cited from the Apostle, and every doctrine comprised in our articles, we have the satisfaction of knowing, that a vast majority of the protestant world clearly coincide in sentiment with us. The reason is this. The different denominations **CANNOT AGREE** wherein the Church they have abandoned is wrong but **DIVIDING** in their opinions, some are found to assail her on one quarter, and some on another. The consequence is, that she proves herself invulnerable upon all points, so far as numbers are permitted to test the credibility of her doctrines.

And certainly in the present case, numbers derive more than an ordinary weight of authority, from the consideration of their shifting so perpetually, that in the issue, we gain the approbation of all parties to some one or other of the prominent articles of our faith. The more orthodox concurring with us in the weightier, and the

residue only increasing the ratio of their respective distances, in proportion to the sum total of their multiplied errors and divisions, until at length they dwindle down, and imperceptibly blend with the friends and retainers of infidelity.

For do we require the co-operation of others, in support of an holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three persons and one God? We obtain the suffrages of the great body of that vast variety of small and discordant sects, which have sprung up, and gradually estranged themselves from the first presbyterian schism. Do we need assistance in defence of sprinkling and infant baptism? Our auxiliaries are equally numerous, and unite their voices in opposition to a few baptists. Do we need additional strength in favour of the two sacraments of the gospel? The baptist himself becomes our advocate, and fewer still are found to confide in the disconnected inward excitements and spiritual repasts of the quaker. Do we insist upon the eternity of future punishments? The quaker, in his turn, will not refuse us the authority of his creed, in exposing the dreamy confidence of the universalist. Do we uphold the doctrine of a vicarious sacrifice and atonement for sin? We perceive the universalist, not merely joining our ranks; but so fondly anxious for the salvation of good and bad, penitent and impenitent, as to exalt the divine oblation and propitiation of Christ, to an height, at yet greater variance with the low estimation, in which he is held by the unitarian. Do we adhere to the authenticity and inspiration of the generally received canon of scripture? Unitarians for the most part combine in aiding us to drive the infidel from his puny shifts and miserable evasions. Do we "believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible?" Even the wretched infidel is here ready to tender us his ungracious hand, and assist in demolishing the baseless fabrick of atheism, if atheism there be.

How evident then, when we examine the Church on the one hand, and the seceders in a body on the other; how evident, that these last are so exceedingly rent and divided in their opposition, that the aggregate of their testimony upon every controverted doctrine, not peculiar to episcopalians, is decidedly in favour of the faith we have so long and so religiously maintained. And what are the fair inferences to be gained from this brief review? Before they can justly charge us with errors, they should first cultivate

harmony in their own ranks; they should first agree as to the nature of those errors, and cease to vibrate among themselves, one moment for us, and another against us, as our several principles and institutions become the successive objects of inquiry. Before they can justify their rejection of a valid episcopacy, and precomposed forms of prayer; they should submit some system better adapted to preserve Christians from the endless divisions and heresies, to which their rejection has given birth. Before they can call upon us to renounce these two Apostolick institutions, still retained by nineteen twentieths of the Christian world; they should present us with unquestionable evidence, that their own renunciation has been greatly countenanced and blessed by our Father in heaven.

Such evidence can never be gathered from the sacred volume. Their disjointed opposition, and the invisible Church for which they contend, as I have already reminded you, are far too obnoxious to this argument of our blessed Lord, "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to DESOLATION; and every city or house divided against itself SHALL NOT STAND." Nor can it be obtained from the records of ecclesiastical history. The posterity of all those, who at the period of the continental reformation failed to reform in the visible Church; who discarded the wheat with the tares, episcopacy and forms of prayer with the inventions of men, have almost invariably declined from the true faith of Christ; and every subsequent schism has either followed the example, or is at this moment furnishing strong indications of being finally overwhelmed in the same heretical vortex.

As the subject possesses a melancholy interest, and is worthy of our most serious consideration, I shall proceed to as brief an examination as is practicable. You must be sensible, that our Christian brethren are constantly adverting to their religious prosperity, as infallible proof of the divine blessing being poured out upon their various Churches. The argument is plausible, and if limited to what may be discerned at a given place and a given period, it would probably prove unanswerable. But I would take a more enlarged view. I would not deny, but that many persons have been individually blessed in a state of schism continued in through ignorance. Our Saviour accounts for it, where he says, "he that is not against us is for us." Paul also observed, "Some indeed

preach Christ even of ENVY AND STRIFE, and some also of good will." He could not therefore have refrained from condemning the conduct of the former, and yet his conclusion is, "Notwithstanding, every way, whether in PRETENCE, or in truth; CHRIST IS PREACHED; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." If envious and contentious preachers then were instrumental in doing some good in the days of Paul, we need not be surprised at the successful preaching of some modern schismatics; we need not wonder, but have reason, after the manner of Paul, to rejoice in the certainty, that there are numbers of pious believers attending upon their ministry, who upon full conviction of being separated from Christ's mystical body, would gladly repair to it, and renounce all their prior prepossessions. Christians like these would therefore give to any society, call it by what name you please, a religious character, and so long as they survived, or their successors retained their principles, the Almighty would not fail to bless their personal efforts to run in the way of his commandments. Little however does this avail to convince me, that he has ever bestowed his blessing upon the cause of schism, as distinct from the individuals, who have undesignedly fallen into its embraces. It would be contrary to his word declaring, "that there should be no schism in the body." It would convert him into the God of disorder instead of order, and including all the sectaries, of strife and hatred, of error and every evil work, instead of peace and love, of truth and holiness.

I shall therefore endeavour to persuade you, that this apparent religious prosperity on the part of some of our seceding Churches is not to be regarded in the light of a permanent blessing from heaven. For this purpose, let us recur to the past, and connect it with the present, premising that I am not arguing with protestants generally, but with those of them, who are disposed to entertain the same sentiments with us upon the prominent doctrines of the cross. Where then I ask was episcopacy first abandoned? You have heard that it was in Germany and Switzerland, and will remember, that the deviation was justified by the leading reformers on the sole ground of necessity. And what have been the effects? What great and glorious advantages have resulted to the present inhabitants of those countries, so distinguished in the annals of the protestant faith?

I am content, Brethren, to submit their actual condition to the most orthodox of our opposers, and when it is known, you must be satisfied, that they would fain destroy this page in the history of their Church. The anti-catholick part of Germany is at this moment completely subdued to the UNITARIAN faith. There it is, that the presbyterian societies have yielded to what their brethren in this country would denounce as a most detestable heresy. There it is, that the most eminent divines of that school have had their origin; and from thence it is, that their works have been dispersed throughout the protestant world, enjoying the highest reputation with all, for their critical acumen, and with many, for their liberal theology. It reminds me of the declaration of Melancthon, before quoted, "I would to God it lay in me to restore the government of bishops. For I see what manner of Church we shall have, the ecclesiastical polity being dissolved." He anticipated tyranny, but it has eventuated in what he would have considered infinitely worse than tyranny.

And do not the same principles triumph in Switzerland? Where are the presbyterian Churches founded by Calvin at Geneva? Nearly all with their branches have become unitarian. Scarcely one of them has escaped the infection. Long ago Rousseau triumphantly remarked, "The pastors of Geneva are asked if Jesus Christ is God: they dare not answer. They are asked what mysteries they admit: They dare not answer. A philosopher casts upon them a haughty glance; he sees through them; he discovers them to be Arians, Socinians; he proclaims it, and thinks that he does them HONOUR. Immediately alarmed, terrified, they assemble, they consult, they are agitated; they know not what saint to call upon; and after manifold consultations, deliberations, conferences, the whole terminates in a nonplus, in which is neither said, YES, NOR NO."

But Rousseau, like Voltaire who bore similar testimony, was an arch-infidel, whose malignant exultation requires to be corroborated by unexceptionable evidence; and unhappily we have it in the person of Dr. Raffles, a very distinguished dissenting clergyman of England, who visited Geneva in the year eighteen hundred and seventeen. Speaking of this city, he says, "The shortness of our stay did not allow us, indeed, to see any of its society; and the information I had previously obtained of the state of religion was not such as to excite in my mind very exalted expectations of plea-

sure from that source. Few of the doctrines, and little of the spirit, which once rendered it the glory of the protestant world now remain: and that truth, which was asserted and maintained by Calvin, a name to which the city of Geneva is more indebted for its celebrity than to the grandeur of its scenery, the beauties of its lake, or the stern character of its ancient independence, has scarcely an asylum within its walls. The pastors of its Churches are ALMOST TO A MAN, Arians, or Socinians. A few perhaps, may cherish the genuine principles of the reformation and feel their influence. I know, indeed, that this is the case, but they bear no proportion to the majority, who are sunk in infidelity and skepticism, and can do but little towards the diffusion of that divine light, and the spread of that glorious gospel, by the resuscitating energy of which the Church of Geneva may again awake from the philosophick dreams of infidelity, and emulate the zeal, the piety, and the simplicity of former times."

Out of the mouth of an adversary, we are therefore enabled to prove the pernicious tendency of the presbyterian system. It has failed, eminently failed in the very place it was first brought into existence. There indeed, as I have learnt from an eyewitness, the sabbath has become in the popular sense a holiday, being principally devoted to recreation and pleasure, to the games and sports of the season. And does this look, as if God had blessed the innovations of schism? Can protestants embracing similar views of the divine character of their Saviour, and of the solemnities to be observed upon the sacred day, arrive at this conclusion? It is impossible. We may and we ought to cherish kind and benevolent feelings towards all the members of the human family; but not to the extent of countenancing the errors of their faith, or the obliquities of their practice.

Passing from the continent to England, the scene is not materially changed. The persecution of Mary drove many of the reformers abroad, and when they returned on the accession of Elizabeth, some of them began to propagate the Geneva system of doctrine and government. Zealous and ardent in the cause, they at length obtained the ascendancy. Before the death of the first Charles, presbyterianism had supplanted the established Church, and a fair experiment was made of its capacity to promote the cause of the Redeemer.

I will give you the result in the language of Edwards, one of its warmest advocates, and to his death far from being instructed by the evils, it had been instrumental in producing; evils that in his address to the existing rulers, he thus freely condemns; "You have done worthily against papists, prelates, and scandalous ministers, in casting down images, altars, crucifixes, throwing out ceremonies, &c. but what have you done against heresy, schism, disorder, against seekers, anabaptists, antinomians, brownists, libertines, and other sects? You have made a reformation, but with the reformation have we not WORSE THINGS come upon us than we had before, as denying the scriptures, pleading for toleration of all religions and worships; yea, for blasphemy, and denying there is a God? You have put down the Common Prayer, and there are many among us that are for putting down the scriptures. You have broken the images of the Trinity, and we have those who oppose the Trinity. You have cast out bishops and their officers, and we have many that cast down to the ground all ministers. You have cast out ceremonies in the sacrament, as the cross, kneeling at the Lord's supper, and many cast out the sacraments themselves. You have put down saints' days, and many make nothing of the Lord's day. You have taken away the superfluous maintenance of bishops and deans, and we have many that cry down the necessary maintenance of ministers. In the bishops' days we had singing of psalms taken away in some places, conceived prayer, preaching, and in their room anthems, stinted forms and reading brought in, and now singing of psalms is spoken against, publick prayer questioned, and all ministerial preaching denied. In the bishops' time popish innovations were introduced, as bowing at altars, &c. and now we have anointing the sick with oil; then we had bishoping of children, now we have bishoping of men and women, by laying on of hands. In the bishops' days we had the fourth commandment taken away, and now ALL TEN are taken away by the antinomians. The worst of the prelates held many sound doctrines, and had many commendable practices, but many of our sectaries deny all principles of religion, are enemies to all holy duties, order, learning, overthrowing all."

Yes, Brethren, you are here presented with the thoughts of a celebrated presbyterian divine, describing circumstances, which transpired under his own observation And does this look as if

God had blessed the introduction of schism in England? To me it wears an entirely different aspect. To me the rapid organization at that time of about sixty different sects, many of them the most loose in principle and in conduct, clearly indicates, that when its floodgates are once opened, there is not wanting all manner of heresy to threaten the destruction of every thing sacred and every thing divine. Even at this day, where is it that unitarianism flourishes in the land of our fathers? I answer, where the liturgy is discarded and ministerial parity is maintained. Buchanan, a man not to be suspected, as you may readily suppose, of speaking without authority; Buchanan tells us that "the presbyterians in the west of England, and some other sects," "are said to have become Arians and Socinians to a man."

And need I inform you, that in our own country, they have long since made their appearance, and broached their doctrines among the descendants of the PURITANS; that they have appropriated to themselves the first of our literary institutions; and that they are every day becoming more and more popular with those that exclaim against our Church, her ministry and her worship? Mistake not however the nature of this argument. I do not mean to abuse unitarians. For many of them, I entertain a very sincere and cordial esteem, and though I cannot concur in their opinions, thinking them extremely dangerous and fatal; yet are they not amenable to me, yet must I leave them to be judged of Him, who judgeth righteous judgment. But when I am told, that the seceding Churches are eminently blessed of God, I adduce these facts, and appeal to the orthodox of every denomination fairly and dispassionately to weigh them, having their understandings enlightened, and their consciences probed.

And are they not facts? Is it not true, that wherever the presbyterian polity has been long introduced, it has invariably proved the entering wedge to innumerable divisions and heresies; to those mentioned by Edwards; to those which characterize our own age, and even our own neighbourhood? Upon this subject, are we not merely to examine the present state of the Church technically called presbyterian, but all those that have gone astray under the auspices of her ministerial parity and extemporaneous worship; and that, still adhering to these modern inventions, have the same valid title to the epithet presbyterian? Undoubtedly, Brethren, such is our

proper course, and when pursued, it reveals all these, as so many facts impossible to be successfully denied or repelled. Far be it then from our Church to be blessed in this manner. We desire not to thank the Lord Most High, for any such changes in the system of truth and order, to which we are attached. In mercy he has hitherto withheld them, and in mercy may he continue to withhold.

There is not a single protestant Episcopal Church upon the face of the earth, where heretical doctrines are either introduced into its creed, or permitted to be inculcated from its pulpits; and the peculiar character of our institutions is such as to afford the surest guarantee, that they never will. Our bishops constitute the first barrier against them. Comparatively few in number, and consecrated at an age, when their judgments are mature, and their principles are known to be firmly established, they are not likely to be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine; they are not likely to experience a material change in sentiment; and contrary to all modern example, one or more of them must change, before our episcopacy can be conveyed to the promoters of any heresy.

Our invaluable liturgy is another and invincible barrier against the introduction of the more dangerous errors. For what would a congregation think of that minister, who after addressing the throne of grace in the words, "O God the Son, Redeemer of the world;" "O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three persons and one God;" and repeating the prayer to be delivered from God's "wrath and everlasting damnation;" What would they think of him, if, after this, he were to deliver a discourse controverting these solemn truths, and attributing their present existence to the weakness and superstition of a former age? You must admit that no congregation could possibly endure him; they could not countenance such flagrant inconsistency. And hence among other things the value of our liturgy: hence the seal of silence, it imposes upon lips, that might otherwise prove reprobate concerning the faith. Our inferior clergy, as well as others, may be hypocrites and dissemblers with God; but so long as they continue to minister at our altars, they cannot publicly decry the doctrines recognised in our forms of prayer. They must first leave us, and if they leave, not having episcopal authority, they cannot build up a heterodox episcopal Church.

Not so however with our presbyterian clergy of any denomination. Their extemporary prayers may be accommodated to any

opinions, and should those opinions cause the dissolution of their connexion with a particular sect, they can still propagate them in another, with the same supposed right to ordain successors in the ministry, that they enjoyed before. A circumstance, which I consider as a very material defect in their system, when compared with our own. With us, the liturgy alone is an admirable preservative against the inroads of schism. They have none, and to adopt the exclamation of the celebrated missionary to the Indies, "Wo to the declining Church which hath no gospel liturgy!" With us, the ordination of a bishop is essential. With them, there is the like authority vested in all their ministers, and this has been, and is, the fruitful source from which all the Churches corrupt in doctrine have obtained their pastors. This is the reason, that while they have been uniformly restrained to presbyters in rank; they have not had it in their power to boast of a single bishop having united himself to either of their communions. The inference is obvious. So far as heretical opinions have found their way into the reformed Churches, we have had no agency in their introduction. The fault lies at another door. Not one of them is episcopal. They are all presbyterian in their external features. They have no other than a presbyterian ministry. They are indeed as universally opposed to bishops, as their more orthodox brethren, and freely unite with them in denouncing the office, as one of the relicks of Roman usurpation. And most willing are we to bear the reproach; most clearly do we discern in our freedom from all the blameworthiness connected with the origin and continued existence of their errors, that God has deigned to bless his true Apostolick Church with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.

I know not, Brethren, what value you may attach to these considerations, but with me they possess an intrinsick weight and importance, which I could wish to have presented in a yet stronger light. Not that I would detract from the personal piety of others, not that I would charge upon the present members of a particular Church all the evils, to which your attention has been directed. It would be equally absurd and unjust. It would betray a spirit equally illiberal and malicious. And yet, to the system embraced by their spiritual forefathers, I am forced to attribute the vast variety of sects, with their attendant errors, which now deform the face of Christendom, and mar the otherwise transcendent beauty and simplicity of the protestant faith.

If wrong, I am deceived by a long series of events, that it is impossible for me to interpret in a different manner. If right, then it is but too certain, that our Christian friends are far from having been blessed to the extent they imagine, in the persevering support of their ecclesiastical polity. They may examine their own hearts, and as true believers in Christ desirous of promoting his glory, and their own salvation, they may enjoy a large amount of real felicity. They may contemplate the local communion to which they belong, and perceiving it to abound with congenial spirits, they may from this circumstance derive an additional fund of gratification. But let them look abroad where their beloved Church once flourished, alike fair and beauteous to the eye, and "how is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!" Let them anticipate the coming of a few more years, and the same defective system may produce even here the same disastrous results. Let them now cast their eyes around, and although they may have reason to be thankful for their individual attainments in religion, yet must they be dissatisfied with the general prospect; yet would I ask them, if numbers of their fellow men may not be involved "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity," owing to those numerous defections from the primitive Church, to which their own has been proved to have led the way.

It is by broad and extended, and not by narrow and limited views, that they should determine the great question, whether they have or have not been blessed of God. It is by inquiring, not of their prejudices, but at the tribunal of their consciences, what would in all probability have been the existing state of the Redeemer's kingdom, had there been from the dawn of the reformation, no schism and no heresy. I can easily conceive, that it would have been infinitely more flourishing, more thronged with the faithful and penitent, and therefore more adorned with grace and glory. They may not credit it. They may think their discernment more acute, their judgment less liable to err, and may continue in these opinions, until the curtain falls, and the truth is ascertained in a quarter from which there is no appeal. For one, I am content to abide the issue, by remaining where I am. I desire no more authentick testimony to convince me, that however unworthy of the honour, it is in the bosom of the Church founded by Christ and his Apostles. If any other could be proved to have done more worthily, to have embraced

purser doctrines, to have exhibited greater devotion to our common Lord, to have enjoined upon its members a closer walk in all holy obedience, or to have received higher evidences of the divine blessing resting upon it; I would not hesitate to enter its sanctuary, and declare myself of its communion. But persuaded by a long course of reading; persuaded by personal experience and observation, of its utter impracticability, here will I live and here will I die, blessing God for his unspeakable benefits, and commending my own, and the souls of all my fellow men into the safe keeping of the holy Jesus. AMEN.

SERMON XIX.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

TO the argument already presented, unfolding, as I apprehend in a very conclusive manner, the evils flowing from the first presbyterian schism, it may be added, that the variety of opinions which prevail amongst protestants, upon the subject of revealed religion, has proved a serious obstacle to its general reception. When invited to accept the gospel of Christ, men are extremely apt to reply; You Christians differ so much, and in some instances so materially in relation to its principles, that we of the world scarcely know what to believe, and of course what to embrace. On the one hand, the Trinitarian system demands our assent, and on the other, the unitarian. Here, some zealous Calvinist enforces the doctrine of God's predestination of whatsoever comes to pass, and there, the equally zealous Arminian denies the dogma, and earnestly contends for the free and uncontrolled agency of the human will. Here, the pulpit resounds with the sentence of eternal reprobation pronounced

against the wicked, and there, the soft cheering voice of universal pardon and forgiveness salutes the ear, and anticipates the final entrance of every soul of man within the blissful regions of life and immortality. And so the contrast might be run through the thousand variant and opposing doctrines which disturb the peace and harmony of Christendom. We would fain learn the truth, inasmuch as we are told, that the truth shall make us free. But when the learned and talented disagree; when the hand, and tongue, and pen of every man are lifted against his neighbour; When polemick divinity has usurped the empire of reason, and thrown a veil of darkness and uncertainty over the records of inspiration; Who shall decide? Who resolve the doubts, that force themselves upon the inquiring mind? Who serve as a pioneer to clear away the rubbish from before the eye of faith, and put us in possession of the sure word of prophecy, the genuine and uncorrupted oracles of God?

Yes, Brethren, this is the common language of mankind, the familiar argument, with which many justify their delinquency in not taking up the cross of Christ. Their vision is distracted, their thoughts perplexed, their understanding darkened. As if placed at the extremity of the subterranean labyrinth of Arsinoe, where no less than twelve palaces, and three thousand chambers by their intricate windings confounded every attempt to revisit the busy haunts of men, they imagine themselves lost in a spiritual labyrinth of conjectures, without a clue to retrieval, without a cynosure, the shining of one bright and brilliant star to guide them in safety and in honour to the destined port of heaven.

I feel the plausibility, more than the plausibility, I feel the weight of this train of reasoning; it bears hard upon us; in our present divided state, there is no little difficulty in giving it such an answer as shall prove satisfactory to the more intellectual portion of the community. But were all orthodox Christians united in the one true Church of Christ, were the fundamental truths of inspiration only to be found within her pale, and not entertained in common with a single sectarian denomination, we might with far greater ease repel the argument, and effectually put down the crest of skepticism of this description. We might not indeed agree upon the merely speculative topics of divinity, about the divine decrees for instance; but then we might assert with invincible force what is even now true, that upon such subjects there is room for honest di-

versity of sentiment, when the nature and character of that revelation is considered, which alone justly claims to be divine.

You can scarcely fail to remember that Peter himself, speaking of the epistles of his beloved brother Paul, expressly says, "in which are some things hard to be understood." And without entering into a minute investigation of the particular points alluded to, I am content to inquire in general terms, if there is any good and valid reason to object to this partial obscurity designedly, if you please, investing the inspiration of heaven. Are there not two volumes containing all things material for us to know and understand? That fair volume, wherein our great Creator shines pre-eminent in power and glory; wherein his voice as the voice of many waters is heard amid the strife of elements, and his goodness, richer than mines of gold, is seen to float upon every breeze, and sparkle in every ray of light; to descend in the shower, and rise with the verdure, that cheers, enlivens, and sustains the heart of man? That brighter and more glorious volume, wherein the soul is taught its value and its powers, its august creation in the image of God, and its future destiny, when, after being, in the prison of this world, brooded and quickened by the Holy Spirit, it shall eventually burst "yon azure shell," and tread the courts of heaven?

Inquire then at the shrine of nature, and can ye unfold her secrets, the precise manner in which she performs her cunning work? How the sun repairs his rays, or the diamond acquires its crystal hue? How the minutest atoms of the air, the ocean, and the land conspire to bring forth all, that is beautiful to the eye and gratifying to the taste? No, no, you can do no such thing. There is here a limit to the deepest research, a point beyond which the inquiry of the proudest intellect is completely baffled. You cannot satisfy yourselves; you cannot control the faith of others. And is this universally admitted? Is it proved beyond a doubt by innumerable theories contradicting each other at every turn, and producing as many schools in philosophy, as were ever marshalled in the province of theology, how could the skeptick wonder, should orthodox Christians of the same Church differ on the purely speculative concerns of divinity?

Our blessed Saviour did not manifest the like emotions of surprise in his nocturnal interview with Nicodemus. He rather knew too well the infirmity of the human mind, and addressed him thus, "If

I have told you earthly things, and ye believe: and now shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things." Even the inspired Apostles did not always agree, or why the controversy between Peter and Paul upon the subject of circumcision? And so with real, genuine, unaffected believers, they might continue to vary as they now do in their construction of numerous passages of the scriptures not essential to be understood in their remote causes and relations, and upon which a diversity of views would be far from working death eternal; since it might be always traced to the mere fallibility of the human mind, and instead of exhibiting a wanton rejection of the divine counsels and authority, it would only show, that were they perfectly clear and unveiled in such particulars, not one sound of intellectual discord would be heard within the pale of the true Zion; in every thing, her altars would be distinguished for concord as well as for love. She would be one and undivided upon the prominent doctrines. Unanimity would be her motto, and her emblem the full, free, and undistinguished communion of the faithful followers of Jesus.

Even now, I grant, that the divided opinions of Christians ought to present no insurmountable obstacles to a practical reception of the gospel. I grant it, from the consideration, that all who really deserve the name unite in the essentials of our common faith. If St. Peter tells us of Paul's epistles, that they contain "some things hard to be understood," he still reminds us of the character of those, upon whom this obscurity exerts a pernicious influence. These are his words, "which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." And what is wresting, but perverting to improper uses? What is intended by the epithet unlearned, but being ignorant of the great principles of the doctrine of Christ? What, by the term unstable, but being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine? What is the extent of this perversion, this ignorance, this instability? Men of this description wrest not merely the language and the reasonings of St. Paul, but also of the other scriptures to their own destruction. They come not to their study with reverence and docility; with submissive minds ready to be informed and guided by the teachings of the Spirit; with open hearts prepared to honour and receive with meekness the ingrafted word. They rather come as captious criticks and conceited sciologists, determined to array their own in-

intellects, their own reason, their own wisdom, against the intellect, the reason, and the wisdom of God. What more then can we expect of such vain and arrogant pretenders, but that they should always dwell on mysteries; that they should cavil about "the secret things," which "belong to the Lord our God," and stumble over those which, the prophet tells us, "are revealed and belong unto us and our children forever?"

It is certainly thus with all the determined skepticks of our age. They perplex and weary themselves with subjects far beyond the ken of the proudest intellect; while many possessing a nominal faith are too apt, as it is written, to be "proud, knowing nothing; but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness." Whereas true Christians have ever repaired to the study of holy oracles, with the sole object of ascertaining the inspiration of their origin, and the divinity of their Author. And having satisfied themselves upon these all important particulars; having found Him, whom their souls loved, they have bowed with reverence to his sceptre, and faithfully treasured up in their hearts all those sayings and doings, which are too clear and explicit to be otherwise than ignorantly or presumptuously misunderstood.

If any man insists, that our future condition is foreordained without foresight of faith and obedience; they know, that the righteous, and the righteous only, are predestinated to life eternal. If it is said, that a few sighs and tears, heaved and shed in a dying hour, will always ensure the divine pardon and forgiveness; they know, that an early repentance, bringing forth for a long time fruits meet for repentance, will assuredly be followed by the salvation of the soul. If a knowledge of the precise instant when the heart is changed and the affections purified, is deemed an indispensable prerequisite to the Christian character; they know, that "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit;" and that to be born of the Spirit, no matter when or where, is the all momentous evidence of our having made our peace with God. If a hue and cry is raised against faith on the one hand, or against works on the other; they know, that wherever the gospel is preached, both combined are

absolutely essential, in order to enable us to lay hold upon its most precious promises. If the character and the redemption of Christ are controverted, as to his divinity and the vicarious nature of his sacrifice; they know, that the question is asked and answered by St. John, "Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father;" they know, in whom they have believed, and only look for the mercy of God unto eternal life, through the merits and obedience, the sufferings, death, and atonement for sin of Him, who throughout the pages of inspiration is commended to our faith and love, as the Saviour of the world, as possessing the only "name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

Yes, Brethren, ask the pious and the godly in this world, those, whom you could not hesitate to pronounce sincere, faithful, and practical Christians, and they will all concur in the belief of these great and glorious truths. Differing, as they do, about many questions upon things, for them too high, and even in as favourable an opinion of each other as could be wished, they will yet universally coincide in these cardinal features of the gospel, and pronounce of all, who maintain and conscientiously act upon them, that they are the true children of God and the inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. Notwithstanding minor discrepancies in opinion, notwithstanding what I believe to be honest shades of difference in the interpretation of obscure passages of the sacred volume, I can therefore upon such ground urge all men to embrace these fundamental principles of Christianity, and so embrace them, that according to the Apostle, "being made free from sin, and become servants to God," they may have their "fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

Even now, I can enforce the same result from the consideration, that however Christians, whether nominal or real, may disagree about the import of the bible, it still contains the words of truth and soberness. I will explain my meaning, and the use to which I intend to apply it, by illustrations drawn from the mysteries of nature. Philosophers have entertained different opinions about light and heat, about gravitation and magnetick attraction, about the cause of the tides and the reason of the earth's revolving round the sun in an elliptical rather than a circular orbit. But let them

speculate and decide as they please; let us range ourselves on the one side or the other of their numerous theories, it must still be evident to the most superficial observer, that all these operations of nature exist; that light is pleasant to the eyes, and warmth exhilarating to the body; that let the exact centre and principle of gravity or magnetism be ever so uncertain, heavy substances are still drawn to the surface of the earth, and the needle in the direction of the pole; that the tides of the ocean still ebb and flow with their accustomed regularity; and that our planet still performs its annual course, producing, with its obliquity to the ecliptic, the seasons and their change. And why? The discordant opinions of philosophers effect no alteration in the established laws and properties of matter. Nature remains the same, whether they continue or abandon their experiments, whether they penetrate her secret recesses, or are forced to loiter in her vestibule.

So also in relation to the religion of the bible; Is it in reality the word and the will of God; the revelation of his own glorious attributes and perfections; the counsel of his wisdom in whatever relates to our duty towards him, our neighbour, and ourselves? Let men construct ever so many variant creeds; let them go on denouncing each other for bigots and fools, with a hundred times the zeal and impetuosity they are now prone to indulge, and still within the lids of that precious volume there will remain the imperishable truths of heaven; they cannot mar them by their intellectual combats; they cannot, as our Saviour says, "make one hair" of their own heads "white or black;" how much more then shall they not fail to change the unchangeable fiat of Omnipotence, by presuming to "put darkness for light, and light for darkness." To attempt it, is indeed the height of folly, the most extravagant of all the extravagant absurdities of which humanity is susceptible. We might as well hope to move the earth by our tread, or to blow out the lights of the firmament with our feeble breath. Against the bible, as against the Church, the gates of hell shall not prevail. We have the power, the honour, and the veracity of God to sustain it, and the consequence is, that long after creation shall return to the original void out of which it was spoken into existence, its truths, its good tidings of good, shall accompany the spirits of just men made perfect to those blessed mansions, where in the presence of the Father of Lights, there will be no errors to distract, no dis-

crepancies of sentiment to reconcile, no voice of discord to interrupt the harmony of congenial souls.

And now I ask you, what is the fair, the only honest inference to be gathered from a statement clear, obvious, and convincing as this? Trouble yourselves less and less about the doctrines and opinions of others. By your own, are ye to stand or fall in the day of judgment. Remember the words of Christ, reproving the anxiety of Peter to fathom the future destiny of John, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me." If it were possible to enter heaven under the wing of some highly gifted mortal, ye might do well to consult him as your oracle, to bend your own to his interpretation of the word, and yield implicit reliance where reliance would be justly due. But as it is, when the soul that sinneth, it shall die, when the man that errs, he alone shall account for his errors, I entreat you to take the bible into your own hands, and to peruse it as for the life of your souls, rather than with impressions weakened by the clashing opinions of others, were they infinitely more repugnant and contradictory than they are. You cannot peruse it long, provided you accompany that perusal with earnest prayer to God for the illumination and guidance of his Spirit, without perceiving, that its more momentous truths lie within a narrow compass; that they speak plainly and directly to the heart; and that it is impossible to withstand them, without experiencing self-reproach and self-condemnation. Whereas the slightest yielding is the commencement of that good work, which God hath promised not to leave unfinished. It is the incipient movement of the giant, faith, to cast off the shackles, that confine you to the servitude of sin; of that faith, which, as its power increases, and its liveliness improves, accelerates in the same ratio its ascending march, until proceeding from strength to strength, it at length produces "the work of righteousness," which "shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever."

And then, what will ye care, for the harsh, incongruous notes of polemick divinity? What will ye care, if opposing sectarians prefer, that the weapons of their warfare should be "carnal," and not "mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds?" Ye will indeed weep over their errors; ye will pray God to re-

move their blindness and asperity, and to implant within them "a new heart and a new spirit." But if they yet persist to fold the shadow and cast away the substance of religion, their speculative controversies will prove lighter in your estimation than the dust of the balance, instead of furnishing the smallest pretext, for abandoning the service of your God and Saviour, for apostatizing from his word of life, and renouncing the riches of his grace.

Nor must I omit to mention, that even now, I can prove the exceeding folly of being induced to neglect religion, owing to the distracted opinions of its professors, by adverting to the fact, that this circumstance affords no refuge to the sinner, when the snares of death encompass him around; when smitten by the hand of the Lord, and stretched upon the bed of languishment, he feels, and trembles as he feels, that a few hours will terminate his mortal strife, and dismiss his soul to its long and dread account. For in this exigency, provided reason retains her empire, to what topics of divinity does he bend the listening ear, on what rely, as embracing within the narrowest scope the essence of the one thing needful. Talk to him about the technicks of theology, those abstruse and metaphysical questions to which I have referred, and which from the time of Calvin have been the fertile sources of much of that ill omened hostility and uncharitableness, so prone to rankle in the bosom of the mere religionist, and you broach a set of themes, that appear no better than a mockery to his alarmed, despairing soul. Talk to him even about the minor truths of Christianity, and they are entirely incompetent to compose his fluttering thoughts and faltering heart. I do not mean by this to depreciate their real, intrinsic value in the season of health and vigour. But still, what are they to the poor sinner in the very act of shaking hands with death, compared with the higher and more experimental doctrines of religion?

Alas, Brethren, time has become too contracted, and therefore too precious to be lavished in their discussion. He wants to learn the nature of that repentance, whereby he may conciliate the divine mercy and forgiveness, through Christ. He wants to listen to some scriptural views of that faith, whereby he may yet range himself beneath the banner of Jesus, and cast all his cares, all the sad and intolerable burden of his sins at the foot of the Redeemer's cross. He wants to hear explained the few remaining tests left to persons

in his condition, whereby through earnest self-examination, he may investigate the state of his soul, and ascertain what prospects float before his eyes, what hopes he may cherish, what internal demonstrations he may have, that God has been very good and gracious to him, that the wounds of his peace are healed, and the avenue opened to his future enjoyment of the blissful presence of his God.

He wants to hear of these, and of nothing else. These are the themes, the only themes fitted to engross the thoughts, and chain down the attention of the dying sinner. And oh, what contempt do they not pour upon the larger number of those contests of words, those heart-burnings of envy, and jealousy, and malice, which divide and embroil the professed followers of the Lamb. Bear witness, ye that are now in paradise. Ye cannot communicate your minds to us, but we know as certainly as if they were plainly revealed and submitted to our inspection, that ye are amazed at the retrospect of those enormous trifles, in which ye were once partially engaged, and to which men are now so prone to devote the chief labour of their hands and hearts. Bear witness, ye also, that are doomed to dwell in the reverse of paradise. The secrets of your dread habitation are alike incommunicable to us, but with equal certainty do we know, that ye would give the wealth of worlds, had ye never stumbled upon that mountain of calamity and ruin, the wretched, miserable contentions to which the gospel of peace has been perverted; had ye remained uninfluenced by these convulsions, and prepared yourselves, by a cordial reception and practice of more heavenly things, to appear among the redeemed in Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon your heads.

Allow me therefore, Brethren, to entreat you to profit by these easily to be imagined disclosures proceeding from the world to come. While here below, liable to be enticed, and drawn aside by the metaphysical collisions of Christians, there are unquestionably "some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable, wrest as they do also the other scriptures unto their own destruction." But remember that were it possible to gain the most accurate knowledge of their true nature and character, they are of a description not calculated to advance our progress a single step towards the attainment of the joys and immunities of heaven. Remember that the goodness, the mercy, the justice, and the righteousness of God. all of them forbid the idea, that he should

wrap in obscurity, or seclude in mystery, one particle of that truth, which it would be life for us to know, and death, eternal death, not to understand. So far from this, "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." According to the faithful and true Witness, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Not however, to the extent of prying out and resolving all his ways, although even here there is something analogous to what painters term the "clare-obscure," enabling us to see as through a glass darkly, some faint and glimmering rays of the glory, which shall be revealed. But still enough to know, that he is our Maker and Preserver, the Author of all present and future happiness, our reconciled God and Father in Jesus Christ, the God, who has promised to reward the obedient and to punish the transgressors: Enough to know, of his only begotten Son, that he is the Redeemer of the world and the Saviour of sinners, our Mediator and Intercessor with the Father, the Bread of Life and the Propitiation for our sins, the gracious Being to whom, we have only to look in faith and obey in sincerity, in order to be saved.

Oh then, that we might never be induced to neglect so great salvation; that we might be zealously engaged to work it out with fear and trembling, with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. To others, we should devolve the task of settling curious questions, and unprofitable dogmas; to others, the too daring presumption of dwelling exclusively upon the many "things hard to be understood," as if they constituted the life and soul of religion. But for ourselves, humble and lowly in our own eyes, penitent, believing, and obedient in the sight of God, we should "press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;" we should covet earnestly the best gifts, and obtaining them in the way of God's appointment, we should live the life, and we should die the death of the righteous.

By such arguments as these, I can therefore, even under existing circumstances, satisfactorily to myself, and I trust to you, obviate every supposed objection to our divine religion growing out of the unhappy divisions and animosities subsisting between brethren professing the same faith. My object indeed has been to present them in such a manner, that infidels themselves might feel their force, and surrender at discretion what I am willing to consider the

strongest of their citadels. But after all, what are the most powerful arguments in their eyes, what in the estimation of even less determined adversaries to the truth, when they believe that a confused medley of sects, by their irreconcilable opinions and bickerings, furnish ocular demonstration, that a religion productive of such dissensions cannot proceed from the God of order, and harmony, and peace? I tell you, Brethren, that as men are more struck by the visible heavens, for the very reason that they are seen, than by the invisible, so are they more affected by the religious discord they behold, than by the religious concord, which the bible exacts. They adopt indeed a very good rule, if applied to other subjects. They judge of Christianity by its effects, and shame and confusion of face be upon us, that this divine system of truth and holiness will not stand the test, in the important particulars of mutual love and charity, for no other reason than this, we are determined to be divided, notwithstanding Christ our Saviour prayed, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are."

With whom the fault lies, I have shown you. It is not with us. We adhere, and with our views cannot cease to adhere to the Church established by the Apostles, under the direction of Christ, and the supervision of the Holy Ghost. Our orthodox fellow Christians have either cast it away, or they are the successors of those who did, and hence the necessity of their returning to its bosom, before the infidel can be reclaimed and made to give up the strongest argument, he is enabled to wield against the truth of the gospel. Let them do this, and for the reasons assigned, I am content that they shall bring with them their purely speculative opinions. I am more anxious for an agreement about the facts recorded in the scriptures, and intended to command universal obedience. Let these be acknowledged, received, and acted upon, by the leading denominations of the protestant faith; let the precomposed publick worship of the bible; let the Church of the bible be embraced with mind and heart, and soul, by the presbyterians, the congregationalists, the methodists, the baptists, and I dare engage that not many years would elapse, before open and disguised infidelity, before unitarianism and universalism, with every false way, would yield to a Zion, thus augmented in numbers, and, as Irenæus said, "composed to unity." It is that fatal schism which he denounced, as

Paul denounced it, and which arrays so many orthodox Christians against each other; it is this that gives strength, and confidence, and audacity to the freethinkers and hereticks of the age.

At present, they are chiefly sustained in their errors by our wretched feuds and jealousies: By the spiritual wars, we wage; the intolerant and vituperative language, we employ; the proselyting plans, we concert to thin each other's ranks; the fire and fagot system, we maintain against the souls, if not the bodies of equally honest believers in Christ. And all this because Churches of human origin have crept in amongst us; because whatever in religion is founded upon the devices of man's understanding, invariably calls up, in some shape or other, the bitter feelings and vindictive passions of our nature; because schism, even in its most favourable aspect, is, in the judgment of Paul, one among the many fatal lusts which war in our members; "For whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?" But could we only contrive to unite under the banners of the true Apostolick Church, could all the faithful and godly combine to come out as one man to the help of the Lord against the mighty, I am persuaded that his blessing would so crown our labours, that the great enemy of souls would receive a blow, more fatal to his cause, than any inflicted, since the foot of Christ was planted upon his head, at the hill of Calvary.

Pray ye therefore, Christians, ye children of the promise, wherever located, pray ye, in the sincerity of your souls, for the peace of Jerusalem. They shall prosper that love her. Crush the monster, schism, and her direst earthly foe will be crushed. Resolve that she shall enjoy this advantage over her adversaries, and your own eyes shall behold, the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. AMEN.

SERMON XX.

ISAIAH lxii. 1.

For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

WITH the present discourse will terminate all the remarks, which I designed to submit in defence of the Church I love, the institutions and the doctrines my head and my heart approve. Throughout the discussion, I have endeavoured to keep within the rules of decorum, to avoid all satirical as well as insulting language, and to make no assertions, which were not capable of being fully sustained, either by unanswerable proofs and authorities, or by the fair and legitimate deductions of reason. If I have erred in manner or in matter, it has not been intentionally, neither with the inclination to lead astray, nor the wish to wound the feelings of a single individual, that bears and loves the Christian name.

Most cordially do I agree, that invective is not argument; that ridicule is not the test of truth; that unfounded statements recoil with invincible force upon such as dare to enlist them in their service. If there were no higher and holier motive to influence my conduct, and guide me in the way I should go, a just estimate of worldly policy would alone teach me, that in the end, candour and sincerity, forbearance and charity, ever triumph over artifice and fraud, inveterate rancour and bitter revilings. By foul language and envenomed epithets, no man hath yet approved himself to the conscience of the enlightened Christian. To authority he will bow, to reason he will lend a willing ear; but let the bigot rave, and the slanderer riot in detraction, he will not be the creature of their fashioning, nor the recipient of their bile.

No inducement then have I to follow their example. None that can be good, and none that is bad. I do not calculate to laugh a sectarian out of his prejudices, and I know, that he will never relinquish them at the nod of disdain, or the sneer of reproach. Argu

ments however must not lose their weight from being too tamely expressed. There is an air of holy boldness, that should mark the language of truth. It proceeds not from a wavering, dubious mind. Its object is not to deal in ambiguous phrases, to trumpet forth an uncertain sound, and beguile the favouring smiles of all sorts of men. But its speech, though seasoned with grace, is firm and decided, free as the air it breathes, and uncompromising as the principles it advances. When did Jesus of Nazareth accommodate his sayings to the passions and prejudices of the multitude? When did he flatter their vanity or attempt to heal the hurt of the daughter of his people slightly? In him, Brethren, there was no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. His maxims, his doctrines varied not with time, place, or circumstance. He had not one for the scribe, and another for the publican; one for the high priest and another for the pharisee. By such means buying golden opinions from all, and on no account venturing to stir a debatable question, or oppose a long indulged and favourite error. But he could speak with plainness and expostulate with freedom, though his mission was love, and his merciful goodness, as unlimited as the universe.

With his example before my eyes, I have therefore no apology to offer for the fearlessness, with which I have breasted the tide of popular sentiment, and exposed errors imbibed in infancy, and cherished to manhood and even declining age; no apology for urging, with zeal and inflexibility, opinions derived from the scriptures, and that I conscientiously believe to be true as God is true. My heart acquits me from all sinister designs. I am not ashamed upon this subject to avow the most secret sentiments of my soul. I know, that it is not polluted by a hostile feeling towards the person of any man. I affirm with confidence, that it is not imbittered by a vindictive temper towards either of the various denominations of Christians. But where they do err, surely it is my duty, without impeaching their motives, or detracting from their piety, to canvass their principles. Where they do entertain and propagate unfounded views of the Church of the living God, it is my privilege, as well as my duty, to vindicate her from every unjust aspersion, and contribute all in my power to exhibit her, in her true light, uncontaminated in doctrine, and unsullied in glory.

In the preceding effort, it is not however my weakness to believe, that I shall succeed to the extent I could wish. I am too sensible

of the nature of human bias; how tenacious we all are of our youthful predilections; what extraordinary energy of character it requires to disabuse the mind of their influence, however wrong. I am also aware that those very features of the Church, which serve to recommend her most strongly to the affection of her children, are precisely those, least adapted to conciliate the esteem of the modern religionist. He either wants something more rigid and austere to the eye, or he is too excitable, of too enthusiastick a temperament, to be gratified with her grave appearance and moderate sentiments. She is too cheerful in her piety for some, and too cold and lukewarm for others! With either class, she has too little, while, with the men of the world, she has too much religion! But to her praise be it spoken, she is in no danger of being dashed in pieces upon Scylla, or of being ingulphed in Charybdis. She neither mistakes pretension for faith, nor freethinking for liberality; a demure countenance for a renovated heart, nor the love of the world for the love of God. Avoiding all extremes, she is rather devout without pomp, and faithful without boasting; glad without gayety, and rational without licentiousness. In a word, exactly calculated for sensible, judicious, and pious Christians. I care not what may be their condition, or what their profession. Whether they are rich or poor, learned or unlearned, addicted to the labours of the head, or the work of the hands, I only ask for good minds divested of prejudice on the one side, and disposed to investigate on the other; to read, think, and judge for themselves; and I am certain, that the Church, and all, which she receives and contains, will meet with their warmest approbation.

This is emphatically the age of inquiry. Its spirit has gone abroad. It is actively and unremittingly employed in the various departments of art and science; and religion must and will receive a large share of its attention. When Christ declares, that "whoso ever forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be his disciple," intelligent persons will not be satisfied with adhering to any opinions upon the sole ground of their having been the received opinions of their ancestors. Such a principle would continue the larger portion of mankind in a state of heathen superstition to the end of time. If they will not hear Christ, and be influenced by the doctrines, which are according to godliness, because their progenitors would not, or could not, then are they destined to bow the knee to Baal, until the world, and the fashion thereof shall have passed away.

But is this desirable? Can there be any Christians disposed to acquiesce in the propriety of this decision? Let them then evince their disapprobation, by discarding the self-same doctrine from their personal creed. It is high time to look at things as they are, and not as gilded over and mystified by preceding generations, however honest and worthy. It is high time to strip the evil genius, schism, of its meretricious dress, and expose it in all the naked deformity of its features. The intellectual and reflecting are not so deeply committed, as to be incapable of bursting their bonds, and paying their homage at the shrine of bible truth. A calm and dispassionate view of the existing dissensions, and respectively hostile attitude of the numerous religious sects will be sufficient to convince them, that all this cannot be the work of a God of love and harmony; that other traits should distinguish the true "people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand;" that they must surrender their human systems and human Churches; and acknowledge that the reformed world requires to be reformed anew.

But how is this to be effected? By recourse to the bible, and where the bible is susceptible of different interpretations, by recurring to the period, when unity prevailed, and inspired truth presided in the congregations of the faithful. As Dryden said,

"In doubtful questions 'tis the safest way
 "To learn what unsuspected ancients say :
 "For 'tis not likely we should higher soar
 "In search of heaven than all the Church before."

The disciples of Christ were first called Christians at Antioch, and not at Geneva. And how was the Church at Antioch, how were its sister Churches of the first centuries constructed? What was their government, and what their ministry? What their publick worship and their doctrinal faith? It is by gleaning from such sources, that we can only hope to commence a new era in the history of Christendom, and therefore have I availed myself of their combined testimony; therefore have I clearly proved, that when the Church was established and ordered in strict conformity to the scriptures, and as we would have it established and ordered, that then there existed peace, and harmony, and love; that all genuine Christians were of the same mind; could worship at the same altar; could reverence the same ministers of Jesus; and partake at one table of the same flesh and blood of their redemption.

To exhibit a scene like this in modern times, we must relinquish all that is novel, and revive all that is old in religion. We must repair the many breaches that have been made in the walls of Zion, and restore her to the state of original simplicity and purity. For in divinity, a moment's reflection should satisfy us, that the course of inquiry must be directly the reverse of what it is in natural science. It must be backward and not forward; backward to the fountain head and last revelation of God, rather than forward, busied in a vain search for new light and new doctrines. A distinction far from being sufficiently observed, and to whose neglect may be justly attributed all the evils, which have been most unpropitiously grafted into the only pure system of faith and morals. Only look at natural science. It has been constantly improving, because it was susceptible of improvement. The ancients were here comparatively ignorant and stupid. The moderns have far outstripped their lingering steps, and are still barely upon the threshold of what they anticipate will hereafter be discovered in the revolution of ages.

In religion on the contrary, an entirely different result presents itself, and for the very reason, that when the volume of inspiration was closed, it no longer admitted of emendation or addition. It was perfect then as it can be now. Notwithstanding every effort that has been made by curiously inquisitive minds, it has been, and is, impossible for them to be wise above what is written. Even biblical learning and criticism derive all their value from the success they have experienced in establishing the authenticity and true reading of the scriptures, as they were originally possessed and understood by the ancient disciples. And what do protestants think of the corruptions introduced during the dark ages? They reject them as unauthorized and unfounded. They compare them with what prevailed before they soiled the pure ermine of the Church, and employ the word reformation itself, because it carries them back to the first and purest ages.

What credit then can we give to the more recent floods of light, that have been professedly shed upon the Christian world? Have their adherents improved upon Paul and his brother Apostles; upon the doctrines they taught, and the Church they founded, under the guidance of Christ and the Holy Spirit? Then is division an improvement. Then is the extracting from the bible doctrines irreconcilably opposed to each other, an improvement. It is a better

state of things, that some Christians should maintain, and others denounce the doctrine of the atonement; that some should assert, and others deny the everlasting punishment of the wicked; and so throughout all contradictory creeds, it must be a great improvement to be constantly harassed and perplexed with the exclamations, "Lo here is Christ," and "Lo he is there." But what rational being, what pious believer can possibly embrace such opinions? It is scarcely possible for him, under these circumstances, not to perceive, that instead of improvement, discord and disunion are melancholy spots and wrinkles upon our holy profession; that instead of progressing, there are many particulars in which Christians, as a body, have retrograded in the race for the heavenly world, compared to what they were in primeval times; and that, to present a brighter spectacle in the eyes of the celestial host, they that have wandered must return to the bosom of the primitive Church.

I will not pretend, that it would have the immediate effect of evangelizing the world, and producing an unbroken unanimity of sentiment. There would still exist some few deniers of Jesus and the resurrection. The scooner would still make a mock at sin, and the wicked man rejoice in his iniquity. But this I will assert. The preachers of heresy of every description would gradually become less and less in number, until at length they would be completely banished from the face of the earth. An Apostolick ministry, united in one Church, would put them down more effectually than any merely human means. I have already shown you, that they are invariably opposed to bishops, and let me now say, that as the continued dispersion of the Jews is a standing miracle, authenticating beyond all doubt the inspiration of the sacred volume; so does this remarkable fact furnish a scarcely inferior or less obvious miracle, in favour of the divine institution, and beneficial nature and tendency of episcopacy.

If however I am told, that there were many hereticks even in the two first centuries; I answer, that they were uniformly presbyters or deacons, and as uniformly opposed by their bishops. I answer, that Arius, of the fourth century, the most successful and renowned of all the ancient hereticks, was also a presbyter, and that, if he did corrupt several of the episcopal order, his sentiments were condemned in a general council composed of nearly three hundred bishops. I answer, that his unitarian doctrines were finally extir-

pated through the powerful and benign influence of their successors in office; and that at this very moment, as if to remind us of their origin, they are only publicly taught and enforced by a ministry of PRESBYTERS.

No longer therefore let us hear of the dangerous usurpation of bishops. The danger consists in the rejection of their order. Were the maxims of expediency alone consulted, it should obtain the approbation of all the orthodox denominations, and be regarded as one of the most efficacious bulwarks against the dissemination of principles, which they unite in condemning. But we place episcopacy upon higher grounds than those of expediency; we claim for it the sanction of divine authority; and considering it equally binding with the two sacraments of the gospel, we say to our pious presbyterian friends of all sects, when you can convince us, that they may be rightfully dispensed with, we shall find little difficulty in admitting the validity of your favourite ministerial parity. Until then, while we bid you "God speed," as to your personal progress in the way everlasting; while we commend your zeal for heavenly things; and esteem you highly in love for your works' sake, we cannot but regret the countenance you now give, however indirectly and unintentionally to all manner of heresy and schism; we cannot even for your gratification cease to maintain, with earnestness and perseverance, those institutions of our Church, which are to be traced to the inspired volume, and that the unanimous testimony of all antiquity ascribes to the immediate agency and direction of the holy Apostles.

We rather entreat you as brethren solemnly to pause and reflect upon these things. We cannot refrain from indulging the hope, that diligently examining, and impartially weighing the many arguments we have to produce, you will ultimately abandon the Churches of recent and human origin, and cordially unite with the Zion of the Lord of Hosts. It is a confined and mistaken view, which limits the subject of inquiry to yourselves alone. You must take a broader range. You must contemplate the effects of division, as exhibited in the actual condition of myriads upon myriads of your fellow men, and ask your consciences, if their alienation from Christ, their neglect of religion, their unsound tenets and delinquent practices, are not owing in a great degree to the unhappy dissensions, so visible in the sounder part of the Christian community.

They certainly cannot have the slightest tendency to recommend our common faith, and I am confident, that they are pregnant with incalculable mischief.

If one of your own Churches is afflicted and annoyed with intestine strife, you do not fail to deplore the injurious consequences upon the surrounding neighbourhood, as well as its individual members. You ardently long and pray for the restoration of peace and concord. And what is confessedly injurious upon a small scale, you should not fail to perceive must be eminently more so upon a larger. All other incidental causes combined do not indeed so deeply wound the general interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, as the emulations and wrath, the jealousies and heart-burnings, the criminations and recriminations of its acknowledged friends. A new convert especially often deems it absolutely indispensable, that he should become the thoroughgoing partisan of his particular sect, and in too many instances the offensive epithets, he applies to others, are felt to be the readiest passports to the confidence and approbation of his seniors in profession. And why should you not be equally engaged in imploring of your heavenly Father speedily to remove these evils, as you are those of a less general and consequently of a less fatal character? It may be, that upon reflection, you will find yourselves less anxiously intent upon the good cause of union than you ought to be; and we know, that secret prayer is rarely offered, and never accepted unless it proceeds from the heart. We know, that however fervent you may be in your other petitions, you must become alike fervent in this, before the world of sinners are destined to be benefited, by your personal example in giving up a party, for the communion and fellowship of the holy catholic and universal Church.

I design not, Brethren, by these observations to afford any just grounds of complaint to our fellow Christians. But faithful, say the scriptures, "faithful are the wounds of a friend," and a friend I avow myself to all, that are godly in Christ Jesus. In this capacity I speak, in this admonish them, that no matter how zealously and profitably they may be now employed in the benevolent labours of love, they could do more as a body towards promoting the everlasting welfare of souls, by the single act of renouncing upon conviction the way of schism, than they will be able to effect, in that state, if their lives could be prolonged to the age of Methuselah.

and their charities be multiplied ten thousand times ten thousand fold. If we may safely judge of the future from the past, wherever they erect an orthodox, posterity will behold a heterodox Church; wherever they found an evangelical, there will rise upon its ruins a non-evangelical school. Such has been proved to be the tendency of their ministry and worship; and so confident I am, of its being the natural consequence of the system they espouse, that I cannot but reiterate the persuasion, and implore them no longer to furnish the incipient causes of the future prosperity and triumph of our mutual antagonists.

More than this, I cannot and I will not urge. Instead of pursuing forebodings not more ungracious to them, than unpleasant to me, I will advert to another theme. I will bid you call to remembrance all that has been advanced in behalf of our venerable Church, and if you concur in opinion with me, that her government and ministry are Apostolick; her rites and sacraments, scriptural; her liturgy, devotional and holy; her doctrines, true and righteous altogether; if the arguments submitted have been followed by the fullest conviction of their clearness and force, my chief object has been successfully accomplished, and a foundation laid for the future welfare of this congregation, which, I have every reason to hope and believe, the lapse of time will only operate to increase rather than diminish.

The course I have taken was commenced under the consciousness, that, wherever intelligence exists, abstract opinions are of little value. I knew that you would require proofs; that you would not be satisfied with naked assertions. But I also knew that those proofs were ready to my hand; that they could be drawn from the scriptures, and corroborated from other sources, in endless profusion. And have I succeeded in making a judicious selection? Have I convinced you, by a statement of facts of incontrovertible weight and authority? Now that the work is finished, whatever may be its subsequent fate, I shall not regret the labour it has cost me. Personal feelings and considerations, from which none of us are entirely exempt, should ever yield, in the minister of Jesus, to an ardent desire to accelerate the march of truth on the one hand, and to retard the progress of error on the other. With this desire I have written, and with this by the divine blessing I shall publish. Our Church in this western country has long been the theme for

almost universal reproach, a reproach partaking as much of acrimony as derision, and I would fain aspire to the honour of vindicating the purity of her character and the excellency of her institutions. Opposition may ensue. Invective may be called out. But they neither alarm, nor intimidate, nor trouble me. Standing upon firm ground, I am conscious, that it cannot be swept, by mere dint of numbers, from beneath my feet; and I am powerfully encouraged by the reflection, that whenever and wherever we have met our opponents in the fair, open field of controversy, they have been invariably foiled in their arguments. The reason is obvious. Nothing can withstand the mighty force of truth. Power may crush it for a time. The mists of error may obscure it for a season. But in the sequel, it acquires strength from persecution, reputation from obloquy, and like the sun emerges from behind the clouds to shine out with redoubled rays of light and glory.

While therefore upon many accounts, I would gladly waive a religious controversy, and rejoice at being permitted to escape serious animadversion; while I would reluctantly challenge any of our Christian brethren to embark in a contest, that might infringe too much upon my usual avocations, yet am I not to be deterred, by any fears of eventual discomfiture, from giving these discourses to the publick, and maintaining them, if necessary, with the spirit, the temper, and the intrepidity becoming a Christian, and especially a steward of the manifold grace of God. Come what come may. "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."

In the meantime, Brethren, let me persuade you to reflect, that the circumstance of existing within the pale of the very Church, originally planted by the college of the Apostles, and freely watered with their own, and the blood of numerous worthy confessors: so far from exonerating you, from the obligation to lead a life of undissembling faith and holiness, should stimulate you to yet higher exertions to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." If there are any Churchmen, who speak a different language, they miserably deceive themselves, and are justly liable to the charge of endeavouring to subvert the faith of others. We recognise no such delusive evasions of duty. We would seriously impress upon your minds, that, in proportion to the peculiar ob-

advantages you enjoy, you are called upon to make the most of them, to the extent of your responsibility.

The Church provides her members with a valid ministry, and they are so much the more inexcusable than others, if they fail to listen to sound doctrine, and irreproachable precepts. She puts into their hands forms of prayer, to be used in publick worship, which are adapted to all their spiritual exigencies, which will enable them to approximate the throne of grace, and supplicate the Lord in an acceptable manner; and if, through any disaffection of their souls to him, they are not found to unite in her solemn services, the more severely will they be judged, and condemned for these omissions. She presents them, in her articles and formularies, with as compendious a system of evangelical doctrine, as it is practicable to obtain from the scriptures of truth, wherein they think they have eternal life; and if they do not treasure it up in their souls, and cause it to regulate their constant belief and practice, yet deeper will the sore displeasure of Almighty God be visited upon them, still more intense will be the consuming fire of his indignation.

Never then, Brethren, no never, suffer yourselves to be so influenced by a vain admiration of the external features of the Church, as to overlook the strong and emphatick terms, in which she importunes and requires you to "walk in newness of life." A more fatal imagination could not beguile you; one that would prove more inimical to your present peace, or more destructive to your future happiness. But in all your principles, and in all your conduct, evince to the world, that your attainments in true religion are not to be excelled, by the most exemplary Christian, that among the dissenters adorns the doctrine of God, our Saviour. It is by a faithful and obedient life, a life of heavenly character and import, that you will most effectually "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men," and baffle the revilings of those, who "falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ." I am far from insisting upon loud and boisterous professions. I would not encourage a vain and ostentatious parade of graces, which while they decorate the person correspond not with the internal emotions of the mind and heart; but there are numerous requirements of the law and gospel, through whose strict observance, ye are to become wise unto salvation, and not one of them will I cease to conjure you to obey; not one of them can be designedly omitted without incurring the greatest of all

privations, the loss of eternal life. The Church inculcates no other sentiments. They are inseparably connected with the pure and holy living she exacts; and if ye bear true love to her, then will ye not hesitate to make those sentiments your own, then will ye gladly inure yourselves to that pure and holy living.

On the whole, Brethren, no one possessed of reason to discriminate, and the opportunity to judge, can for a moment question the pre-eminent excellence of our beloved Zion. She may be calumniated by bigots of severe and contracted minds. She may be derided by enthusiasts deranged in their intellects. She may be denounced by skepticks having "an evil heart of unbelief." But neither separately nor combined, by craft nor by violence, will they be able to prevail against her, to undermine her foundations, or level her bulwarks to the ground. By the liberal and unprejudiced; by the sober and considerate; by the wise and good; she will ever be regarded, as "A CROWN OF GLORY IN THE HAND OF THE LORD, AND A ROYAL DIADEM IN THE HAND OF HER GOD." They will perceive, that for long ages, he has been her shield and her buckler, the impregnable fortress of her strength and the lofty tower of her defence. They will appropriate to her, as I have done, the prophetick language of Isaiah's vow; and although its more brilliant accomplishment may be deferred to the days of millennial felicity, then at least will it unquestionably appear in the sight of men and angels, that HER RIGHTEOUSNESS HAS GONE FORTH AS BRIGHTNESS, AND HER SALVATION AS A LAMP THAT BURNETH

AMEN

SERMON XXI.

2 CORINTHIANS iii. 17.

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty

WERE the actual condition of a country to be always estimated by the partial judgment of its friends, there is not one to vie with these United States, in the devotion of its citizens to the cause of liberty, in the ardour with which they maintain it, or the jealous spirit by which it is guarded against the invasion of foreign and domestick foes. And certainly in a political point of view, there is much to warrant the manly pride and elevated self-complacency of our countrymen. Compared with all other nations, we do enjoy the freest principles and the freest institutions. Such are the constitution and the laws, that the rich have no prerogative to oppress the poor; no licence to divert the streams of justice; no power to forge the massive chain, and having forged, to fasten its links around the bodies or the souls of freemen.

But while we thus occupy a proud pre-eminence in the scale of human rights and privileges; while distant lands admire the splendid, and, as I would fain believe, the substantial fabrick of our independence; while they sigh for its rich possession, and spend their strength in vain and fruitless efforts to obtain it, there is, in the pure eye of God, a species of slavery pervading every portion of our favoured clime, baneful in its aspect, corroding in its properties, and destructive, fatally destructive, in its operations. It is not discerned in manacles for the hands, or fetters for the feet; in the yoke of bondage applied to the neck, or the bridle of arbitrary rule to the organs of speech. It is not political, it is moral slavery, which exists and thrives with us, in common with all other sections of the human family. A slavery, that however disgraceful and disastrous, still spreads its contagion far and wide; still includes us within its expanded sphere, and brings us into captivity to the law of sin and death.

O Sin, thou wretchedly deformed and hideous monster! How dost thou wield the destinies, and control the triumphs of humanity! How dost thou infest every haunt of licentiousness and revelry! How dost thou commingle with the gay and festive hours of our day and generation! We cannot stir, but thou art near, to defile with thy presence, to contaminate with thy touch, to disgust with thy filth and folly. We can make no harbour from the storms of life, in which thy intrusive foot is not often shoved, thy smile so winning and so treacherous, thy voice so dulcet and so false. There is indeed a remedy, but how few embrace it. There is a sanctuary, to which the weary and heavy-laden may always repair, deriving strength in their weakness and courage in their dejection. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Where the Spirit of our God takes up his abode, there slavery ends; the slavery of corrupt thoughts, of impure desires, of unhallowed passions, of ungodly deeds. The mind becomes enlightened, and the heart reformed. Sinners have struck the flag of rebellion, and hoisted the banner of the cross. They loiter no longer in the camp of the enemy. They swell the ranks, and gather around the tent of the Friend and the Saviour of their souls.

Let us analyze this matter. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," because its possessors have been born again, born anew in the sacred soil of freedom. And to be born again implies something more than simple conformity to established rites and usages. By the outward application of water, the skin may become white as the bolted snow. But what avails it, if the heart continues black as jet? What avails a deluge of waters, if when they pass away, rank and noxious weeds shoot up to choke all other verdure, and rifle the husbandman of his promised harvest. God forbid, that I should breathe a sentiment adverse to a single institution of the gospel of Christ. I rather honour them all. Religiously do I honour holy baptism. I believe it identified with, if not essential to, the character of the Christian, desirous, as our Saviour was, of fulfilling all righteousness. But is it credible, that the sprinkling of a few drops of water, or the immersion of the whole body in the purest and most limpid stream? Is it credible, that either of these constitute the sole expedient requisite to recover the lost Image of God, and exist redeemed by his grace, and sanctified by his Spirit?

Men there are, whose loud contentions about the mode, whose wonderful tenacity about quantity and quality, indicate as if special virtue was to be attributed to these merely incidental circumstances. But I would as soon think of calculating a man's piety by the dimensions of his body; of associating the idea of sinfulness with the short, and of righteousness with the tall in stature. It would not be more absurd. It could not be more preposterous. Neither sprinkling nor immersion change the heart. They may be performed in infancy or in manhood, and that heart may nevertheless wax worse and worse, in both the highway and the by-way of sin. It is to the adult, of no virtue to be baptized, unless he is buried with Christ, by baptism, to the entire conquest of the whole body of sin. Do this, and the external washing may have been slight or profuse, early or late; it matters not. The great desideratum is to be conformed in our inward parts to the image of Him, that hath created us.

Nor is Christian liberty, or the state of being born again, to be confounded with noisy rant and verbal declamation upon the subject of religion. Have ye never read, that many, who rejected our divine Redeemer in the days of his flesh, arrogated to themselves the praise of unrivalled sanctity? Have ye never read of their unbounded zeal and devotion, of the tithes they paid and the prayers they offered, of the proselytes they gained and the stigmas they cast upon the true servants of God? They even denounced the conduct of the immaculate Jesus himself. They charged him with being the companion of harlots, the friend of publicans and sinners; with being addicted to wine and fond of luxurious living. But what was the testimony borne against them by this inquisitor of the secrets of the heart? "O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh."

And are we compelled to read, in order to become conversant with persons of their description? Have we never seen or heard of them distributed in various quarters of our country, equally audacious, equally intolerant, equally disposed to denounce and reprobate the members of other communions, to question their principles and brand their piety? Alas, Brethren, the final steps of bigotry and intolerance are yet to be trodden. It is to be feared, that it will be long, very long, before their last vestige will be ob-

literated from an insulted soil. Were you to judge of some men by their looks, you would think that angels had assumed the human shape and form. But judge them by their words and actions, and there is a want of charity, a bitterness of temper, an exuberance of passion, a deficiency of good works, that unitedly force upon us the conviction of their being destitute of the vital spark of renovation, of their being ignorant of God's righteousness, and that, going about to establish their own righteousness, they have still to submit themselves to the righteousness, which is of God, by faith.

No better is the Christian liberty or spiritual regeneration of those, whose religion partakes of that peculiar quality of the ocean, the ebb and flow of its waters: Who come forward in the full tide of successful experiment, and anon retire only to expose, the more palpably, a wide spreading strand of mud and pollution: Who one moment withdraw themselves from the world, with the avowed purpose of entering into the closest communion with their God, and the next return from their devotions to commit iniquity with a greediness set to its edge and sharpened by their recent abstraction: Who upon the holy Sabbath exclaim, This is the Lord's day! This is the day that the Lord has made, we will rejoice and be glad in it! While on every other day, they discover themselves to be so thoroughly engrossed with temporal concerns, as effectually to exclude all serious thoughts, and all devout affections from the mind: Who have even the ingenious faculty of dividing the Sabbath, as did the Romans some of their festival days, making the one part holy, and the other profane; the morning a suitable time to worship God, and the evening to find their own pleasure; the morning to confess their sins, and the evening to furnish themselves with the foundation for a subsequent confession; the morning to make their peace with God, and the evening to break it; the morning to be solemn and devout, thoughtful and humble, the evening gay and inconsiderate, idly perambulating the streets or reposing at home upon the couch of languid ease.

Strange inconsistency! Marvellous contrivance to serve two masters! Were it thus with individuals compelled to earn their diurnal sustenance with the sweat of their brows, we should be very prompt in charging them with indolence and folly, to suspect them of vice, in some one or more of its degrading forms. And is the service of our Maker less valuable, less imperative than our own? Is it no-

thing to squander away the hours expressly commanded to be kept holy, and at the same time a most scandalous and unpardonable offence to neglect the incumbent avocations of life? Not such will be the decision of the Most High, at the great day of account. Feigned excuses, disingenuous though plausible arguments, will then weigh lighter than a feather in the scales of retributive justice. They, who now think themselves Christians, liberated from the thralldom of sin, because they pay some outward deference to the externals of religion; and the renewal of whose minds is limited to occasional acts of homage and devotion, will then have ample cause to regret the time past of their lives. In eternity, things are not done by fractions or by halves, whether the mansions of misery or of happiness are concerned.

So also in relation to this world, a more fatal error does not prevail, than that, which supposes there is a time to be spiritual, and a time to be worldly; a time when we must surrender all our powers and faculties to the exclusive business of religion, and a time when we may dismiss all thoughts of our Creator from the mind, living and acting as though he had abdicated his throne, and suspended for a season the course of his providence; as though he had relinquished his authority and power to exact obedience, and reign supreme in the affections of the children of men. Wretched, truly wretched and fallacious reasoning! How astonishing, that persons bearing his image and professing to wear the livery of his Son should be thus egregiously deceived! It belongs to the casuistry of this world, and may now blind the eyes and indurate the consciences of multitudes; but, at no distant period, "the light of the wicked shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine. The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and his candle shall be put out with him." Where the Spirit of the Lord actually resides, there must be visible, at all times and all seasons, the genuine effect of regeneration. It must be seen in the cultivation of every right, and the abandonment of every false way, or it will assuredly be counted worthless and unprofitable, at that solemn hour, when to have been truly redeemed and sanctified, during the term of our mortal pilgrimage, will alone ensure a favourable reception from our final judge.

Yes, Brethren, the liberty of the Christian, the birthright he enjoys, admits not the idea of his wantonly grieving the Holy Spirit of God.

whereby it was alone effected, and himself sealed unto the day of redemption. To understand its real import, you are to remember, that a natural birth is obviously the commencement of our existence. We have not the remotest conception of a prior state of being. If it ever transpired, we can at least recall none of its features, by the aid of the most retentive memory. So likewise in that birth of the soul, brought about by the renovating influence of the Spirit of our God; every subject of its power acknowledges, that he had no spiritual life in all previous time. Ask him of his convictions, of his sorrow and mourning for sin, and he invariably testifies to his having been an impenitent sinner. Ask him, if his disease was thorough and mortal, he will tell you, that "the whole head was sick, and the whole heart faint." Ask him, if he was in all particulars a stranger to holiness, he will answer, that it would be a waste of time, a hopeless task, were he to endeavour to select, from the moral perversion of his soul, one single act, that, viewed in all its relations, would be calculated to produce unmingled emotions of pleasure and self-approbation.

No, no, the process of regeneration, the process of being born again, is precisely what the words indicate. It collects together all the phenomena, that would attend a new nativity; or perhaps, if you can figure to yourselves the condition of a soul, as completely bereft of life as is the body of some deceased relative; it is the resurrection of that soul, from the dead, clothed with new garments, new affections, new desires, new powers, habits, and susceptibilities. Look at it enclosed, as it was, within a living tomb, and it was dead in trespasses and sins, dead to the purity of holiness, to the perfections of the Deity, to the higher duties and accountabilities of a sentient being. But no sooner has this change been wrought, than it becomes alive to God, through Christ. The sinner sins no more, lest a worse thing should come unto him, and because he has lost all relish for the mere gratification of his sensual appetites.

I do not mean, that his natural taste is gone; that allowed pleasures have either lost their savour or their value. But his affections were once riveted to the earth, they are now fastened to the skies. His passions were encouraged to usurp the mastery over reason, they are now made subservient to the far nobler law of the mind. His whole conduct was utterly unworthy of a being hereafter destined to associate with the holy angels, it is now regulated by

the maxims of purity, he has contracted a love for the things, which make for God and his Christ. Not a day passed over his head, in which he did not to a greater or less degree repulse and grieve the Holy Spirit; he is now intent upon cherishing the good counsels and gracious influences of this Comforter sent from on high; he is transformed by the renewing of his mind, and earnestly endeavours to prove, by his actions, what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

Let us call to mind a few of the instances most likely to be observed in the altered principles, habits, and inclinations of the sinner. To survey him in the depravity of his nature, make all the allowances that you please, is to survey an intelligent creature forever doting on a world, that for him begins to-day, and closes to-morrow. No one ignorant of eternity could for a moment suspect, that he had the faintest perception of another and a better life; so fully is he prepared, for the present, for its riches, its honours, its pleasures; so fully is he prepared to sacrifice every moral, every virtuous, every religious sentiment. Circumstances indeed every the object of pursuit. It is now one thing, now another, now a third, that possesses unrivalled attractions in his eyes. It is either wealth or power, glory or amusement, science or literature, and still, while the fascination prevails, all other considerations appear to be effectually excluded, or only canvassed, as so many incentives to redoubled exertion. He must obtain the prize in view, and to ensure it, no toil is deemed too arduous, no early impressions too sacred to be effaced. In this contest, principles often prove a feeble barrier to the aspirant for temporal distinction. As means multiply upon means, he hesitates not to use them, through any delicacy of moral feeling, or the dread of sin. As guilt accumulates upon guilt, he relaxes rein after rein; his impetuous, headlong career is checked by no voice of conscience, no fears of hell, no hopes of heaven.

But behold this sinner under a different aspect. Behold him, after his eyes have been opened, after his heart has been softened, after the terrors of the law have sunk deep into his soul, after repeated prayers to heaven have been answered by the effectual operations of converting grace, after he has become penitent, and faithful, and obedient. Behold him then, and you will observe in all instances of genuine conversion, that "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty;" liberty from the shackles of a servitude

worse than despot ever forged, or galley-slave endured. Old things have passed away, and in passing away, they have carried with them actions and pursuits, he once vainly thought the highest sources of temporal felicity. All things have become new, and in becoming new, they have convinced him, how truly inestimable and sublime are the charms of religion, the paths of holiness, the daily intercourse subsisting between the creature and his great Creator.

Has he lived the merest votary of pleasure? His chief pleasure now consists in contemplating the perfections of the Most High, in adoring him for his matchless exhibitions of love and mercy to fallen man, in praising him for the riches of his grace, in having provided mansions of everlasting glory for the pure in heart. Has he constantly dipped in volumes, where, amid a few sparkling gems, is collected a profusion of the vilest dross? He has been taught the priceless value of the volume of inspiration. He prefers it, as a vein of gold is preferred to a mine of lead, as a fountain of pure water to the stagnant moat and fetid pool. Has he leagued with vice in its grosser forms, and ventured where so many of the young resort to breathe the atmosphere, and imbibe the infection of death eternal? He has learnt to humble himself in the house of his God, to bend his knees in worship and his soul in prayer, to anticipate with joy and listen with rapture to those words of heavenly grace, which reveal the promises and predict the fruitions of life eternal. Has he indulged malevolent passions and sought for vengeance, where blood is the only liquid, which can satiate the thirst of mis-called chivalry? He has found it far better to copy the example of Christ, always reviled and yet no reviler, always persecuted and yet committing himself to Him, that judgeth righteously. Has he been callous to the sufferings of humanity, turning away his face as the poor man pleaded for a trifle to relieve the urgency of his wants, and prolong a wretched life? He has acquired a tender and affectionate sympathy for the distresses of his fellow beings. He can no longer refuse to alleviate their sorrows, and contribute freely and bountifully to their aid. Has he assisted to brand the innocent with reproach, to hew down their reputation with the weapons of detraction, and with true Jesuitical cunning charge them with crimes for the nefarious purpose of concealing his own enormities? He has been instructed to cherish a more righteous and magnanimous spirit, to endure with patience even the malice of the sinner, to expostu-

late with him gently and kindly, to afford him no just ground of offence, and to extenuate rather than aggravate the measure of his guilt. Has he been addicted to licentious language? Have oaths, and imprecations, and blasphemies, polluted his breath, and mangled the tongue, that was designed to praise, and not to outrage the glory of God? He has been made to feel, that even for "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." He has set a watch upon his lips, and fastened a bridle upon his tongue. For cursing and swearing he has substituted the voice of prayer, and perhaps resounded the songs of Zion. Has he drained the intoxicating bowl, and exulted in the table of an epicure? He has discovered that there is richer wine and more delicious food. He has banqueted at that far nobler board, which it cost the life of Christ to spread, and where, in the exercise of a true and lively faith, his redeeming blood is drank, and his crucified body broken and consumed. Has he in fine revelled in vices outnumbering the stars of heaven, the leaves of autumn, the sands upon the sea shore? Has he pursued them with thoughtless levity, or more inveterate animosity to the divine law? He has learnt to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour. He has exchanged them for the mild and peaceful virtues of the Christian faith. He has resolved to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work." He has determined, as the height of his ambition, to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Yes, Brethren, such is the change, such are the triumphs of the renovated Christian. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty:" Not the liberty of "continuing in sin, that grace may abound:" Not the liberty of flying in the face of heaven, and defying the power, that made him, by resisting his authority, and trampling upon his laws: But the liberty, which results from being victoriously born again, and transformed into a new creature in Christ Jesus. Give me this liberty, exclaims the full-hearted Christian, and I will not use it "for a cloak of maliciousness." I shall be free indeed; free from wrath and anger, from strife and contention; free from the pleasing snares of vice; free from the tyranny of evil habits; free from that slavery of the body and the soul, which yields to no other charter or form of emancipation, which must else consign me

to the regions of despair, and prove lasting and unchangeable as eternity itself.

Permit me then to inquire: Have I succeeded in giving you a faithful epitome of the true import and character of Christian liberty? Let it be the first wish of your hearts to reduce it to your personal possession. Fight the good fight of faith, and you will have it. Contend, manfully contend, against the world, the flesh, and the devil, and the victory must be yours. I cannot too often remind you, that "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: So is every one that is born of the Spirit." Its operations are silent and invisible. They are inscrutable. They are known and comprehended by the divine Omniscience alone.

But what of this? It does not detract from the health and vigour of the peasant, that he is incapable of analyzing the process of digestion, and of tracing his food through the numerous vessels, which convey its nutritious properties to every part of his sturdy frame. It does not render him the less agile or robust, the less adroit in the management of his muscles, or pre-eminent in athletick feats. Nor is it necessary to the work of regeneration, that it should be better understood, or more precisely marked. You have only perseveringly to use the means, all plainly revealed in the sacred volume; you have only perseveringly to pray, that they may be made effectual in the manner God hath ordained, and you can no more fail of success, than you can fail of being clean after repeated ablutions; you can, in the course of time, no more mistake the indwelling influences of the Spirit, no more mistake the liberty with which Christ shall make you free, than you can the evidence which now impels you to the belief of your corporeal and intellectual existence. The unconverted may, but the converted seldom or never. They are too thoroughly changed; too widely variant from what they were before. The idiosyncrasy, if I may be allowed the word, following in the train of their religion, shines out apparent as the sun in the heavens. Their domestick relations, their intercourse with society, are sustained under happier auspices and after a more excellent way. They are vigilant, where they were careless; conscientious, where they were presumptuous; holy, where they were sinful; obedient, where they were disobedient. If Jesus commands, they prepare themselves according to his will; if to repent, they repent; to be

believe, they believe; to pray, they pray; to receive his sacraments, they receive; and so, throughout all the duties of the divine life, they follow him, as implicitly as the shepherd is followed by the sheep. There are no excuses, no delays, no turning aside to the right hand or to the left. Such liberty as this, they ask not from the Captain of their salvation. It is neither desired nor felt. His promises are all yea and amen, and so are his ordinances. In them they live, and in them, hard by the horns of the altar, they die. There is consequently to the sincerely faithful and holy, no room for mistake. So long as they "continue in the faith grounded and settled;" it is morally impossible, that they should be "moved away from the hope of the gospel;" that they should not enjoy "the full assurance of hope."

By these rules therefore, Brethren, judge yourselves, and you will soon discern where your heart, with your treasure is. If in a state of bondage to sin, ye will be ashamed to confess Christ before men; ye will think more of their opinions and their sayings, than ye will of his present love or of his future frowns. Though he cease not to whisper to your consciences, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again;" ye will deny the necessity, and produce the multitude, as your example and authority. But if ye can lay your hand upon your heart, and feelingly pronounce it to be the place, "where the Spirit of the Lord is;" then do ye experience the liberty of the text, the liberty of the Sons of God. Ye will be wise as serpents, and yet harmless as doves; intrepid as a lion, and yet gentle as a lamb. Ye will not tamper with flesh and blood, nor be reduced to the melancholy strait of palliating your avoidance of duties. Ye will not be alarmed for yourselves, that the avenue to heaven, with its everlasting doors, is reported to be barred against all, who are not "born of water and of the Spirit;" against all, who "eat not the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood." But commiserating the errors, and sighing for the destiny of others, ye will have the testimony of a good conscience, that your liberty has not been abused. "Ye will have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." The happiness of the sinner, miserable and unsatisfying as it is, is restricted to the scene before him; but your happiness will survive, and augment where it survives. The righteous soul but leaves a prison, when it leaves this mortal coil. It is here, as to its loftier flights, incarcerated in

the dungeon of the flesh. It is in heaven alone, that its liberty can be perfect and complete. It is there, that, in the more exalted sense, the Spirit of the Lord resides. It is there, that, entirely free from pain and sin, from sorrow and sighing, from disease and death, ye will have Christ for your portion, and the blissful mansions, he hath prepared, for your inheritance forever and forever
...AMEN.

SERMON XXII.

ROMANS xiv. 22.

Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.

THIS is one of those passages of the holy scriptures, which receives at once the spontaneous assent of the mind. It contains a proposition, that no matter in what region born or in what climate bred, no one can have the hardihood and temerity to deny Give me the testimony of my conscience, that what I have done, what I am now doing is right, consistent with morality, and conformable to the divine will; give me this, and I need not envy the high and lofty ones of the earth, the splendour of their fortunes, the dignity of their rank, the gorgeousness of their equipments, or the glory of their power. My soul shall still dwell at ease. It may look up at the innocent face of heaven without a blush, and read, in the azure softness of a summer's sky, a striking resemblance of its own calm and undisturbed repose.

But are there clouds and darkness, lurid fires and more than Cimmerian gloom, to brood over the prostrate world, and impart to it a noisome medley of "horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights unholy?" So does a guilty conscience shake with terrors and startle even at the falling of a leaf. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth." "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt." If they are ever happy,

it must be, when they are bereft of thought. Left to their own reflection, "There is no peace saith my God, to the wicked." He alone is "happy," whose heart is pure, whose hands are clean, "that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth."

Let us collect our ideas, and trace out the causes. Is it not owing in a great degree to the intrinsick loveliness of virtue, to the sentiment of self-approbation it is sure to produce? Who ever performed a good deed only to weep over the folly and infatuation of his conduct? Suppose it were an act of charity, a beggar relieved, a widow succoured, an injured orphan redressed. Did either of these gratuities ever lay the foundation of future sorrow and repentance? You may find unworthy objects, and, discovering this, may regret the imposition played off upon your feelings, and the unprofitable nature of the demand responded from your purse. But never can the really benevolent man be harassed with such reflections as these, I have fed the hungry, and clothed the naked. I have listened to the voice of humanity. I have parted my garments, and denied not my morsel to the poor. My conscience bears witness against me, that in this I have sorely offended thee, O God; have mercy upon me, and let not this my wickedness shut up thy loving kindness in everlasting displeasure. Were we to use such language, we should be regarded as maniacs. Were others to use it, our comity would be severely taxed to refrain from a smile. We should pronounce them fit candidates for Bedlam. Among all the strange anomalies of our nature, I have never known a good action, performed in a good spirit, rise up in judgment against the performer, and condemn him. He never says, Cursed be my prodigality, I have protected the fatherless and caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. Cursed be my integrity, I have kept my word, and discharged my honest debts. Cursed, supremely cursed, be my devotion, I have worshipped God in the spirit and in the understanding; I have loved him for the perfection of his attributes, and adored him for the exuberance of his mercy. O why was I such a fool. so ideotick and insane? "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth." No, Brethren, he never says thus. I have never heard him, nor have you. Give me then, I insist, "the testimony of my conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, I have had my conversation in the world:" Give me this, and

I am as certain of being happy, internally happy, as God is happy. Briers and thorns grow every where else; but in a good conscience there is no sting.

I find myself also obliged to refer to the opposite qualities of sin. No man can allow it, without condemning himself. It is the order of nature, as to the body. My bones exclaims the waning sensualist, are full of the iniquities of my youth. These limbs are not paralyzed by old age. So far as years are concerned, I could yet run with the swift, and vie with the strong. And do you ask the cause of present infirmity, of chronick pains and debilitated nerves? I am forced to attribute it to early indulgence. Happiness keeps aloof, it flies from me, because I would not, after the manner of Paul, "keep under my body, and bring it into subjection." Because I had the folly to draw upon its resources faster than the hardest system would authorize, therefore am I now suffering the consequences of premature decay.

It is the order of nature, as to the mind. We know not its component parts, if indeed it has any parts. But still there is an organ for bitter reflection, and an outlet for sighing and tears. Show me the gayest sinner, put him upon the stand as a witness in his own cause. Let him rehearse his pleasures and testify of his joys. They may sparkle for the time. In the recital, his eye may be lighted up, and his countenance flushed. But let me tell you, he is not the man to endure the severity of a cross-examination. You must not ask him, if his pillow is always soft; if his dreams are always pleasant; if his solitude is never disturbed by a pang. It would soon melt away the snowy texture of his felicity. It would prove it counterfeit and spurious, or himself a perjured man. By the divine appointment, "evil pursueth sinners." It fastens upon the mind. It there inflicts a series of wounds, which no human ingenuity can heal, none of the specificks of this world completely cure. At best, they ever leave a scar behind, or utterly failing, the very soul itself is constrained to bleed at every pore.

Again, Brethren, in relation to happiness, life is to be regarded in the aggregate, and not in divided portions. I remember, that when the Lydian monarch demanded of Solon, whom he thought the happiest of men, the sage at once referred to the dead, and not to the living. And why? He knew nothing of the scriptures. Those of the new testament were then unwritten. But still his answer

was comprised in the well known proverb, "Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." And Cræsus, though at the time he spurned the cautious wisdom and forecast of the philosopher, from whom he was expecting a personal compliment, was afterwards but too well convinced of his almost inspired sagacity. So it is with the sinner, and his pretended happiness. He may look ever so fresh and fair, so full of hope and of glee, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, in which he shall find no pleasure. But let them arrive, and the frost of spiritual death is upon him. Whether young or old, let weeping friends attest, that his last hour approaches, and I want no surer evidence of the misery that infests his paths. He cannot calmly cope with the monarch of the tombs. He cannot serenely gaze upon his hard features, or gladly comply with his imperative summons. If he yields, it is because he is forced to yield. It is not voluntarily. It is not with a light heart, a free spirit, and a rejoicing hope. It is often with keen remorse, and the most terrible presentiments. I have seen it myself. I have conversed with many, who have been brought to believe in Christianity, from being frequently called to witness the indescribable agony of the wicked at the door of death, contrasted with the invariable composure, resignation, and even joy of the righteous.

And can he be justly termed a happy man, whose life is such as to produce fear and trembling when he comes to die? It would be the grossest perversion of the epithet. Our life must be estimated from the cradle to the tomb, before it can be properly applied. Whatever apparent felicity may precede the last extremity, we have the touchstone then, and as we endure it, so must our epitaph be written. Vice ever shrinks from the trial. Virtue and religion alone triumph there. He alone is purely happy, whose heart condemns him not when time recedes, and eternity is about to dawn.

Even in the days of health and strength, the man is not happy, whom a sense of ingratitude compels to avoid the eye of his benefactor; whom a knowledge of positive injuries inflicted causes to turn away from the hapless victims of his rapacity, his cruelty, his determination to forget right and pursue wrong; whom a consciousness of ill desert, of bad fame, of general execration, haunts in all the intercourse of life, with every man's hand lifted against him, and no voice to sooth, console, and sympathize. Whereas he, who acts

by the golden rule of the text, fears no evil, and is molested by no just reproach. He can meet his neighbour without the averted face, the downcast eye, the faltering tongue, the trembling hand. Armed with the panoply of a good conscience, he can meet the world, nor dread its scrutiny, nor shudder lest he should be put to shame and confusion of face. Better than all this, he can meet his God, not glorying in himself, not relying upon his personal merits; but still firmly persuaded of the divine mercy and benevolence; firmly persuaded that, for the sake of Christ, his humble heart and renovated spirit, his faithful obedience and holy conversation, will be accepted in love, and rewarded in glory. And nothing more is requisite to make him happy. He has renounced every false way. He has embraced the good part which Mary chose. He has forborne to do that which his conscience enlightened by the gospel would not allow, and therefore he looks backward and forward with pleasure; backward to a life devoted to the service of his Maker; forward to an eternity to be spent in songs of praise and scenes of joy.

Such then are the causes, succinctly and of course partially adverted to, such the causes for the saying, which is written, "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth." The method to be adopted, in order that we may be justified in applying it to ourselves, may be more difficult to describe. I will embark in the attempt, and at the same time enjoin upon every hearer to be equally disposed to learn and to practise what he learns.

Consideration is the first lesson it teaches. We usually act without it; without troubling ourselves in morals or in religion to pause, to think, to consider our ways. And strange to say, this very inconsideration is often made the apology for our errors. We sin against the strongest light and the brightest evidence. But then we did not mean to sin. We had not really much time to reflect about it. In great haste, we did so and so, wrong we admit, and yet for these reasons no doubt very excusable in the eye of God. But O ye simple ones, crieth wisdom "uttering her voice in the streets," "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?" If I understand any thing of the bible, it is not even the sincerity, with which a man does that which is wrong, thinking it to be right, that shall excuse him when he comes to appear in the presence of

God. "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth," was the language of Paul speaking of himself as Saul of Tarsus. But as an Apostle, he declares in reference to this very conduct, and notwithstanding the then state of his mind, that he was "a blasphemer, a persecutor and injurious." He never attempted to justify himself, by pleading either ignorance or sincerity in extenuation of his crimes. He rather freely condemned them. He freely pronounced himself guilty, though he "obtained mercy, because he did it ignorantly in unbelief."

And can you think, he would have done otherwise, if, when fully apprized of a more perfect way, he had allowed himself to blaspheme, to persecute, to become injurious from the want of reflection? Nothing could be more absurd. God commands us to reflect. For what else, did he give us minds endowed with the capacity? For what else, doctrines and precepts requiring to be canvassed in order to be thoroughly understood? The answer is obvious. It demolishes the whole fabrick of this vain, this idle, this presumptuous plea. He gave us these things, that we might ponder our paths; that we might rise above the level of the brutes, and examine the nature and the consequences of every action, before we permitted it to transpire. A contrary doctrine would hallow the vilest habits. For as has been shrewdly observed, "man is a bundle of habits," acting for the most part, as he has acted before. Swearing, for instance, because he has learned to swear. Slandering, lying, defrauding, and so on, because through use, they have become incorporated with the genius of his whole spirit, soul, and body. But will arguments derived from such a source palliate the guilt of the robber or the murderer? I have not so learned the jurisprudence of our country; nor must you so learn the pure and holy commandments of God. You must rather learn to think wisely and well, to weigh each motive by which you are influenced, and forming your habits after mature deliberation to become attached to those only, that are virtuous; so attached, that it would not be less difficult to change them, than it would be to turn the rapid stream, or bend the knotted oak.

Nor to guide you in your course of conduct, to make you truly happy in your pursuits, can you too frequently search the scriptures. I think but poorly of the moral sense, that is not founded and form-

ed upon them. It may do for the heathen, confined as they are to the natural law, written upon the fleshly tables of their hearts, by the unseen finger of God. But for the Christian: What faith can he have in that blighted moral sense, which taught the Spartan, it was a virtue to steal, and the Messenian, the height of piety to sacrifice his daughter to appease the wrath of Apollo; which still instructs the new-made widow of the East to give her body to be burned, and her own child to light the funeral pyre? Before I can believe, that we want no better rule, than a natural conscience, to direct us in the way we should go, some higher testimony is requisite than these flagrant violations of the Christian maxims of right and wrong.

And even then, what are we to do in all those cases, where moral guilt or innocence is referrible to the divine law alone? The sin of Adam consisted in mere disobedience. The fruit, he plucked and ate, was as harmless in itself, as any that is reared in our gardens. It was only because it was forbidden, that he offended and fell. So of many of the duties enjoined in the scriptures. Who can show, that they have any other binding force, than what is given them by the counsel and determination of God? To murder, if it had not been prohibited, you might object, that one man's life is as dear as another's. To theft, that its authorized permission would impair the only principles upon which society can be held together. But what crime would there be in not praying to God, in not believing in Jesus, in not loving your enemies, in not submitting to baptism, in not partaking of the bread and wine in remembrance of the death and sacrifice of Christ, until his coming again? What crime would there or could there be in these omissions, provided the observances themselves had not been expressly commanded? I deny, that in such case there would have been any, the slightest guilt; none that could have inflicted a wound upon our moral susceptibility; none that could have drawn down upon our heads the displeasure of a God, whose will was unknown, whose ways were past finding out. And hence the necessity in these, and similar particulars, of having our understanding informed, and our conscience enlightened. Natural means will not avail. I read no such requirements in the heaven above, or in the earth beneath. To discover them, the bible itself must be read; and being read, in order to be truly happy, we must not ask for higher

authority; we must not be obliged to condemn ourselves for their non-performance, for allowing ourselves to omit duties prescribed by the Almighty, and enforced by the most solemn sanctions.

Cheerfulness in obedience is also an important characteristic of a good conscience. I have no faith in observances, which are irksome and galling to the observer. What pleasure can the galley-slave take in the oar to which he is chained? What merit has he in labours performed under the excitement of lash and stripe? And so with the professed Christian. Does he inwardly loathe his profession? Having embraced it in the moment of alarm, does he continue it through servile fear? I would not give a straw for his conscience. I consider the dissembling compact between his body and soul, no better than the compounding of felony in the criminal law. It is the sacrifice of his passions on the altar of form and show. It is bargaining for heaven, as a man bargains for liberty, by paying the price he would gladly retain. But the true Christian, who alone possesses the right to appropriate to himself the heart-cheering declaration of the text, the true Christian loves religion for religion's sake. He loves the whole round of its duties. He loves them for their purity, for their holiness, for their conformity to truth and reason, for the present peace they bring, as well as the future hopes they inspire. He puts me in mind of that faithful dove of Noah, who flew to execute his master's will; of that dutiful and affectionate child, who has only to divine a parent's wishes in order to execute them; last and best, of that holy Jesus, whose meat it was to do the will of God. On such grounds, and with such views, he may well be happy. He has no occasion to condemn himself for pretending to be what he is not; for wearing a mask, to conceal from the world the hidden mystery of guilt. But his soul is equally transparent with his actions. He can sing with grace and melody in his heart to the Lord. He can cry out with truly Apostolick fervour, "God forbid, that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

Finally, Brethren, there is, and there must be, great tenderness of conscience with the Christian. Tenderness with regard to himself: He must be perfectly satisfied, that what he is about to perform is right, morally and intrinsically right, not merely in his own judgment, but in the judgment of God. A doubt will force him to pause

until that doubt be removed. If there be more than a doubt, if it grows into a conviction, not all the entreaties of friends, nor all the frowns of foes can cause him to violate the intimations of his own internal monitor. If he should happen to err in opinion, he will be sure not to err grossly in practice. If he should encounter the reproaches of those he loves, he will at least spare himself the accusations of a wounded spirit.

Tenderness moreover in relation to others: It is now too late to attempt an analysis of that statement about meats and drinks, which precedes the text. The Apostle sums up his argument with peculiar felicity, where he says, "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth or is made weak." Whence we learn, that in things indifferent in our own estimation, and yet evil in the estimation of others, something is due to the prejudices, some little personal sacrifice to the weakness of friends, or if you please to their superstition. I will illustrate my meaning by a familiar example. Suppose that a Christian should consider the amusement of a publick ball perfectly innocent and harmless; that he could enjoy it, without impairing his piety, or cooling the ardour of his love for Christ. Others entertain a very different opinion. They assert, that it is attended with a waste of time, and a depravation of morals. And what under such circumstances would be the advice of Paul? Give it up. "For" A BALL "destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who" DANCES "with offence." What as a general rule would be the conduct of the sincere believer? He would listen to that advice. He would follow it. He would "follow after the things which make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another." And this I call a proper tenderness of conscience for the prejudices of others, if the opinion of Paul is to be relied upon, in giving his decision in a case strictly in point. It does not require, that I should cease to do what is positively good, because some enthusiast has taken it into his head, that it is positively bad. But what terrible calamity would befall Christians, and I might add the human race, if there were no balls? They could still pray as devoutly, and believe as sincerely, and obey as cheerfully, and love God as fervently, as they now do. I do not think, provided the amusement were universally admitted to be innocent, that its loss would abstract very materially from their happiness, and this I

know, that in the judgment of the Apostle, the most indifferent thing becomes evil to that man, who in its pursuit flies in the face of public religious opinion; who in this manner wantonly invades the scruples of those, for whom Christ died.

On the whole, Brethren, this sermon is designed to prevail with you to covet earnestly the possession of the best companion, we can possibly enjoy in this transient life; I mean a good conscience. If you know of any thing, belonging to our frail nature, better or more desirable; any thing better calculated to make your sleep refreshing, or your waking hours pass away with a higher relish; any thing, that shall cause your lives to be more honourable, or your deaths more glorious, in God's name, embrace it; fold it to your bosom, and wind it around your hearts. I am for the greatest good, be it where it may. I am for happiness here, and happiness hereafter. But if, upon diligent inquiry, you can discover no flaw, no error, no hyperbole in that saying of the great Apostle, "Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth;" why then, make it the subject of your thoughts, and the rule of your actions: Amid all the chances and changes of this mortal life, be it your chief, as it must be your most important, concern to preserve a conscience void of offence both towards God and man. It is more valuable than rubies. It is a more precious gem in the setting of the soul, than wealth can purchase, or monarchs wear. It will not lose, it will increase its brilliancy from being exposed to the attritions of time; and when "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the earth shall melt with fervent heat," its lustre will not be dazzled or obscured by the bright sunshine of eternity. AMEN

SERMON XXIII.

ACTS xxvi. 28.

Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.

IN the moral properties of the mind, in the expression of their hopes and fears, mankind have been the same in every age. The same has been their love of ease, of happiness, of all that can satisfy the desires of the heart. Circumstances may vary the principal object of attraction, but a principal one there always is, for whose attainment the pulse beats high, and the bosom throbs, and body and soul co-operate with all their powers. I wish it was religion, the divine religion of Christ. It can fill up the widest expanse of human hope. It can add new lustre to the brightest and disperse the shadows of the darkest day. It can pour the fullest tide of felicity into the various channels of this mortal life, and when life shall perceptibly ebb away, it can extract every pungent quality from the sting of death.

And yet, when religion possessed its most able advocate in the person of Paul; when with a manly spirit and a commanding eloquence, he vindicated it from the defamation of its enemies; when there was power vouchsafed him from on high to give unwonted energy to the language of his lips, and the inspiration of his soul; even then a Jewish king was heard to qualify the unexpected convictions, which began to fasten upon his mind. He should have come out openly and fearlessly. He should have humbled every sentiment of pride. He should have dismissed every shadow of doubt. He should have acknowledged himself instructed as a hearer, convinced as a sinner, fully satisfied and resolved as a disciple of Christ. But mark ye the prejudice of the Jew, still lingering in his thoughts. Mark ye the slowness of his heart to believe, the cautiously equivocal terms in which he replied to St. Paul, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.”

Mark ye this. It may hold up a mirror to your consciences, Brethren, and that mirror may reflect a similitude, ye will one day

re very glad to disavow. Do you understand me? Have ye not time and again been sorely grieved by arrows lanced from the bow of the preacher? Have ye not felt the deeply searching power of the Spirit in your souls, as ye have heard the Son of Man described, the divineness of his origin, the fervency of his love, the perfection of his character, the wonders that he wrought to reconcile you to God, and enable you to lay hold on the exceedingly great and precious promises of the gospel? Have ye not felt, have ye not heard, all this? And feeling, hearing, have ye not trembled as sinners, as dying men, as candidates for immortal life or immortal death? Have ye not moreover, in the midst of this alarm, this trepidation, this sinking of the spirits before a God of consuming fire, have ye not mentally cried out with King Agrippa, in answer to the voice of instruction and entreaty, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian?" Ye have, I know the nature of the human heart so well, that I can vouch for it, with the utmost confidence and decision. Upon this subject, there can be no mistake, no uncertainty. Instead of warmly professing to deny it, another and a very different feeling should prevail, the feeling of shame, and of self-reproach. For where do ye get that word, *ALMOST*? It forms no part of the economy of grace. It enters not into the creed of the true followers of Christ. So far from recognizing it, as proceeding from the Father of Lights, Paul answered King Agrippa and said, "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds."

You perceive therefore, Brethren, that in this all important concern, there is to be no wavering, no irresolution of the mind. It must be prompt, decided, unequivocal. Almost will not do; we must be altogether persuaded to become Christians. The path of safety is the path of conviction, perfect and entire conviction. There grow the fruits of piety. All else is a drear and barren waste, without one flower of spring to cheer the eye, or one ripened product of the autumn to gratify the taste of man. Why then this indecision, this lingering of the soul on the hither banks of Jordan? Light has dawned upon it. It shines with a brilliancy too pure to dazzle, and too clear to confound. Why then do we not wake out of sleep? It is high time. Why do we not leave our moral dungeon, and invest ourselves with the whole armour of light? There is no sunshine equal to the sunshine of the gospel,

I will tell you. I will begin at the foundation, and assert that it is owing to the corruption of our nature. Fond, easy man thinks that he is very good and very innocent; that he comes forth from his Maker's hands fair as the morning, and guileless as its dew. And so he does, if appearances alone are to be consulted. So do the young of animals the most ferocious and malignant. But in their case, if there be any thing more than appearance, why do they not grow up mild as the lamb, and gentle as the dove? Why does not "the wolf dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together?" You will attribute it at once to nature, and not to education. There are animals so fierce, that they cannot be tamed, though you were to commence the trial at the most tender age; and, in spite of appearance, I ask no better proof of a radical malignity connected with the first breath they draw.

It is precisely thus with our fallen humanity. It buds and it blossoms well. I know not an object lovelier than an infant cradled in its mother's arms. It is a happy emblem of innocence; but after all, it is an emblem only. It is not a reality, a substance that will stand the test of experiment, the chemical test applied to it by the hand of time. In other words, an infant in its progress to maturity invariably shows, that it was shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin. By no pains, can we prevent the original taint in its nature from being rapidly disclosed. Every parent knows it, every human being, if he will but revert to the past, and trace up every evil thought and habit to the fountain head. They were developed before he could comprehend what was right, and what was wrong. Our Saviour himself declares, that they proceed "out of the HEART." If this were not the source, you might find one individual at least, who from his youth up would be authorized to affirm, I have always "washed mine hands in innocency." I have neither thought amiss, nor spoke amiss, nor done amiss. But no such thing: Save the man Christ Jesus, "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." We begin in ignorance. We continue in opposition to knowledge and the sense of duty. As the Apostle acknowledges of himself and his brethren, "When we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death;" so it is with us. Disguise the matter as we please, here is the grand foundation of all our indisposition to em-

grace the principles, and exhibit the virtues of the Christian life. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

It is not meant, that there is a hatred against his majestick essence, or against those attributes, which have conspired to bring us into existence. But there is a hatred against his law, as decided an aversion to its provisions, as instinct ever manifested against whatever is pernicious to health and happiness, amongst the lower orders of creation. Sin is pleasant to the eyes, though we have the evidence of experience, that it is bitter to the taste. There is no effort requisite to make us sinners. We are made before we are aware. While to be holy: How great must be the struggle! How wonderful the change! It is like facing the storm, or breasting the surges of the sea. And call you this acting in compliance with the voice and the dictates of nature? I cannot arrive at the same conclusion. If it were natively pure, and holy, and of good report; there would not always be some lusts to mortify, some lawless passions to subdue, some reason and forethought to be exercised, before we are found heartily consenting to the will of God. As ye would be Christians in reality, as ye would not be satisfied to be ALMOST persuaded to be such: Dismiss ye therefore, Brethren, the carnal mind, with all its enmity to the divine law: Resolve, by the grace of God, to triumph over your natural corruption. Such is the infirmity, and the imperfection of our race, that a remainder of the poison will always be present with you. But the Holy Spirit searcheth the deep things of man, and applying to him, ye shall have power vouchsafed to keep it under; to set to it bounds, which it cannot pass: to make you a new heart and a new spirit, that ye may not die eternally.

Another cause, intimately connected with the preceding, and greatly controlling us in our opposition to the way of life, may be referred to our passionate attachment to this world. I find myself surrounded on every side by mere worldlings; by men and women, who never seem to reflect, that this state of trial will soon come to an end; that we shall soon be even as others, bereft of life and motion, shrouded in the land of silence, and crawled upon, by the very worm, we are now so prone to crush beneath our tread. In this particular, the experience and the fate of friends are quite lost upon us. We neither take note of time, of the gray hairs which begin to sprinkle our locks, nor do we take note of the dead; of

those, who once thought as we are accustomed to think, and are now cold, and still, and silent, as we shall be. O death, when art thou destined to strike the blow upon others, which shall at the same time strike out all deadness and insensibility from the region of our hearts. Thy sickle is yet wet with the blood of the slain. Thou hast been mowing in a field, where the fairest and the tallest plants have been cropped by the vigour of thine arm, and the inveteracy of thy hate: The young and the beautiful, rich in virtue, glowing with all the ardour of conjugal affection, and exulting in a mother's feelings, and a mother's fondest hopes: The artist, skilled in the noble science of wresting the features of friends and relatives from thy withering touch, and yet more skilled in the happy talent of inspiring love for his benevolence, and esteem for his integrity: The scholar, in the pride of his genius, and the strength and vivacity of his mind; while he was yet sunning himself in the walks of literature; while he was yet gathering every flower, that could impart splendour to his diction; and availing himself of every resource, that could ensure a loftier stretch, and communicate a more ethereal air to the towering flight of his eloquence.

Yes, all these have recently fallen before thee, as grass doth fall before the mower, to be dried up and withered by the summer's heat. And still we take no warning. The world smiles as fair and inviting as before. It opens the brightest prospects to our eager gaze, and we cannot, we will not, bring ourselves to believe, that they are continually liable to be dashed out forever. Else I demand; what is there in its boasted fruitions, that is worthy to be enjoyed at the expense of pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father? Nothing, absolutely nothing. It is a word of all others best adapted to convey a graphick delineation of the poverty of all things here below, compared with the fulness, the richness, the magnificence, and the glory of those, which bloom and ripen fast by the river of God, and are immortal as the tree of life. O ye votaries of a scene so brief and so precarious; how much better would it be for you, to use this world as not abusing it, to receive the good it yields with thankful hearts, and suffer it to prove instrumental to your more intimate acquaintance with its benignant Author. So long as your affections are groveling as the dust ye walk upon, Christianity can have no form, nor comeliness, no beauty in your eyes, that ye should desire it. It loudly calls upon you

to repent; and instead of repenting, ye plunge yourselves yet deeper in the mire of pollution. It imperatively requires you to obey, and instead of obeying, ye do the things which ye ought not, ye leave undone the things which ye ought to do. A moral infatuation involves you, an infatuation brought about by the great deceiver, and whose spell must be broken, ere ye can possibly exist alive to the nobler purposes of existence.

These combine to assure you, that the friendship of the world, as well as the carnal mind, is enmity against God. Ye must therefore give it up. Ye must think, speak, and act, conscious that ye are everlastingly responsible for every thought, and word, and deed. Religion will then begin to display its unrivalled charms, and salute you with the choicest of its blessings. Ye will not be satisfied with being *ALMOST*; ye will determine to be altogether Christians. On most of the now dearly prized attractions and pursuits of this life, ye will write, "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity." On whatever tends to help you forward towards your heavenly home, ye will inscribe, "In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof, there is no death."

Another cause of our disinclination to close with the overtures of the gospel is to be ascribed to our want of faith. Let no man tell me that he believes, whose life is in the wrong. Belief is a plant of more auspicious growth, and shoots out branches loaded with fruit of a brighter colour, and a richer taste. Can you believe that fire is consuming, and yet thrust your hand into the flame; that poison is deadly, and yet imbibe the corrosive liquid? How then can you in your consciences believe, that Christ is the Saviour of the world, the only Redeemer of your souls from the pains of death and hell, and yet boldly reject his counsels, and utterly refuse to be warned by his terrific denunciations against the wicked. Does this indicate as if ye gave undoubted credence to his mission; as if ye thought upon his gospel as the great power of God unto salvation; as if ye were willing to stake your life upon its truth; as if ye fully comprehended, that while there is a reward to the righteous, "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish" will surely overtake every soul of man that doth evil? To me it speaks another language, and is attributable to a far different state of the mind. There are men, who will not believe until they are made to tremble: who disdain to give in their ad-

hesion to a "faith, which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Place them upon the verge, and they will recoil from a leap into eternity. Convince them, by ocular demonstration, that there is a place of perdition, where "their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched," and then, and not till then, will they deign to "give diligence to make their calling and election sure." I am not so skilled in these matters, as to be able to point them out, with an unerring finger. But that they do exist, is known to themselves; their works do testify of it to their consciences, with all the weight of irreligion, and all the precision of numbers.

And this I term the want of faith, the want of a true, lively, and realizing faith. Oh I beseech you renounce it, renounce all unbelief, as ye would the most bitter potion presented by your bitterest foe; or the soul, it will droop and languish; it is already diseased, and it will otherwise die. I love inquiry. I love to have the heart stormed through avenues leading from the head. And every head may be informed, it must be informed, before ye can "taste the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come." Under other circumstances, ye may have momentary convictions of sin; ye may be struck down by some sudden blow inflicted by the ministers of Christ, and incited by this word in season, ye may exclaim, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." But there will be nothing durable, nothing that shall not pass away like a meteor in the air, until by much reading, by serious meditation and profound research, your minds shall become enlightened, and your faith in Jesus strongly and deeply rooted in the soil of the understanding. It is faith alone, that through Christ can put to flight the corruptions of the heart, that can overcome the world, and give you a right to aspire to the enviable distinction of being called the sons of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.

The almost Christian must inevitably fail to attain these blessed results. He will fail upon the same principle, that King Agrippa failed. Having heard his case, you can find no encouragement afforded him, by St. Paul, to rest in a partial conviction, in a sudden impulse in favour of the doctrines of the cross. A more legitimate feeling prevailed. The benevolent wish escaped his lips, "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds."

Paul therefore had not so learned Christ, as to place any confidence in the courtly smile of royal approbation. He prayed, that a half-way persuasion might be followed by an entire and a living faith. And Paul was right. He knew, that whatever compromise there might be on meaner things, there could be none in the article of religion. He knew, that our Saviour Christ had said, "He that is not with me is against me." He knew, that to be almost persuaded of the truth of Christianity was no better than after death to be almost admitted to the presence of God and the Lamb; to be tantalized with the view, and still debarred the privilege of actually chanting the song of triumph and deliverance, in the chorus of believers. Ah no! This last will stifle no sigh of anguish nor assuage one throbbing pulse of pain. It will render the bottomless pit even more dismal to behold, and the vengeance of eternal fire more intolerable to bear. Exactly as in this life, no greater disappointment can be endured, than that which ensues, when the hand is extended, and the prize is unexpectedly wrested from its grasp.

Oh then, that I could persuade you, Brethren, you who now occupy the accepted time, the day of grace and salvation, that I could persuade you to, be altogether on the side of Christ, altogether such as was Paul, when he stood before a crowned head, and felt that the gold and the jewelry, which glittered there, were poor and paltry bawbles compared with the splendour and glory of the crown of life. To be thus, ye must not take pattern by the faint exclamation of the text. It comes in too questionable a shape. It is a sound signifying nothing, and pregnant with no issues, that are likely to be brought to a good account, beyond the grave.

ALMOST indeed! I have neither sympathy for the word, nor any the slightest confidence, in the thought, it was designed to convey. Under the covert of its shade, a sickly species of morality may seem to flourish; but like an exotick planted in an uncongenial soil, it will eventually fade and decay; it will not be watered by the dew of a heavenly grace. Its possessor may even go forth with such as keep holy time; he may range himself in the sanctuary of the Lord of Hosts; and like Agrippa listen with courtesy to the delivery of truths well calculated to set the soul on fire; but as our Saviour said to the young man in the gospel, it may be said of him, "one thing thou lackest," and that one is worth the world beside; it is the one thing needful. He has not an eye of faith to turn on Jesus,

when from the throne of his exaltation, he holds out the prize of our high calling, and with unutterable love exclaims, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." No, he can do no such thing, and sooner than partake of his disability, I would rather be a bondman enduring the lash of a savage, in the person of a master; I would rather be a slave unjustly condemned to the galleys, and fated to tug at the oar for life, oppressed by the fervour of a mid-day sun. Whereas he, that has been persuaded to be altogether a Christian, altogether "such a one as Paul the aged:" Oh how serenely flow the years of his mortal pilgrimage: How sweetly shines the Sun of Righteousness upon the habitation of his soul: How exclusively does he love to have his conversation in heaven, and in this fountain of all felicity anticipate the reception of joys unspeakable and full of glory.

Would you ask, Brethren, for a more minute description? I will appeal then to the testimony of Christ, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." The altogether Christian has duties to perform, and in the sincerity of his heart, he evades none, in which he is clearly instructed by the Spirit of truth, the Spirit which presides over God's most holy word and work. He is known to mortify his members, which are upon the earth; to curb the headstrong passions of his nature; to be animated with the disposition to live peaceably with all men; to be mild though firm, gentle though courageous, benevolent though discriminating in his charities, a lover of all mankind though a lover of himself. He is known to be a good citizen, and placed at the head of a family, he is tender as a husband, affectionate as a parent, kind as a master, friendly and obliging as a neighbour. He is known, or rather, he knows himself to be a man of prayer, of secret, retired, and holy prayer, where no human eye can see, and no human ear attend; where, in the spirit of self-abasement, he humbles himself before his Father in heaven, confessing his numberless sins, and imploring forgiveness in the name, and for the worthy sake and merits of Christ Jesus, his Lord. He is known to remember the sabbath day and to keep it holy; to be at his post in Zion, when glad tidings of good are proclaimed in the ears of sinful and dying men; and if the sacrifice of the death of Christ is commemorated, he is known to cling fast to the horns of the altar, and to rejoice in every opportunity to glorify him in the presence of his saints. In a word, he is known to lead a life of faith in the Son

of God, and when I have said this, every truth is embraced, every sin is repented of, every command is obeyed. Paul himself could do no more. He could have done nothing, and therein we are all upon a par, he could have done nothing except God had been with him.

When therefore, after his own plain, fervent and energetick manner, I again express the ardent hope, that all, who hear me this day, might become, not merely almost but altogether such Christians as was the Apostle Paul; it is my desire, and it is my duty, to commend you all to the merciful hands and protection of Almighty God; to whom alone will belong all the glory and the praise, provided your faith be made strong, your lives holy, and your salvation certain. And this, may He, in his infinite wisdom and out of the abundance of his goodness, mercifully grant. May he so direct your goings in the way, that your Christian life may be altogether of that description, which shall ensure peace of conscience here, and terminate in bliss eternal hereafter. AMEN.

SERMON XXIV.

LUKE xiii. 24.

Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

IT is not among the least of the many faults which serve to blight the promises of the human spring, that instead of being principally intent upon our own concerns, we are wonderfully inclined to divine the prospects, and intermeddle with the affairs of others. Unasked and undesired, advice floods in upon most individuals from innumerable fountains of wisdom. Do they embark in any enterprise? All the chances of success, or of defeat, are calculated with minute precision. Be the event what it may: It is predicted and repredicted with a degree of solicitude scarcely exceeded by that experienced on the part of adventurers themselves. With certain

people, "Mind your own business" is of all others the stalest and the flattest adage. It shuts out inquiry. It presents an insuperable barrier to idle and impertinent curiosity. It is to the busybody, what nauseants are to the stomach, bars and bolts to a felon. If he cannot find out, how others live, he hardly lives himself. If he is not made the depository of a thousand secrets, which concern him not, he is consumed with spleen, and famished in the midst of plenty.

What else could have tempted the man in the gospel to inquire of our Saviour, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" Suppose the answer had been in the affirmative; FEW is a term so extremely indefinite, when we reflect upon the immense numbers, who are destined to appear before God at the judgment day, that nothing could be more vague and uncertain than every calculation of personal indemnity derived from such a source. Suppose it had been in the negative; MANY is liable to the same objection. It determines nothing individually. Whether applicable to the saved or to the lost, it would have utterly failed to disclose the future destiny of the inquirer, and therefore our Saviour employed it. He endeavoured to stimulate him and his associates to active exertion, by the appropriate admonition, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." He repressed a curious and inquisitive spirit, with the broad, unlimited declaration, "For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able."

Answers, Brethren, that are addressed alike to the hopes and fears of men. To their hopes: For are we directed to strive? Who can have the effrontery to assert, that this striving may not in one case as well as in another prove successful? It certainly holds out the language of encouragement to me, to you, to every man; and holds it out in such a manner, and from a Being so pure, so entirely incapable of deception, that for one I cannot believe in its being made null and void, through some secret, irreversible decree. To their fears: For are we assured, that many who seek will be disappointed? Who can rest satisfied with a few feeble and irresolute efforts to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called?" Who can deem himself safe in slackening his pace on the road to heaven, when it is predicted of many, that their hopes will be blasted, and their fears fulfilled?

I entreat you, Brethren, to reflect seriously upon these things. Neither flatter yourselves with false expectations, nor yield to the

counsels of timidity or despair. Neither think it easy to ascend into heaven, nor impossible to descend into hell. It is my design on the present occasion to establish the converse of either proposition. I shall exhibit the difficulties presented in the one case, the facilities offered in the other, and close with a few remarks intended to impress upon your minds the infinite value and importance of early and persevering attention to the religion of Christ.

And first, It is not easy, it is difficult, to ascend into heaven. I do not mean in an ultimate point of view. I am rather persuaded, that the soul of Lazarus was conveyed with the utmost ease in the arms of angels, and finally lodged in the bosom of Abraham. But the obstacles to which I allude are all confined to the surface of the earth. They are included within the circle of the human heart. The language of the scripture is, *STRIVE*; the practical answer of man, *I WILL NOT*. There is something in the gospel of Christ, which to the natural understanding is contemptible in doctrine, and loathsome in practice. And what is it? Strange and paradoxical as the objection may seem, the economy of our redemption is too simple, it is not sufficiently intricate and perplexed, it requires not some gigantick effort proceeding from the puissant arm and undaunted heart of man. The riches of grace are too free and gratuitous. Eternal life is too much the undeserved gift of God, and is obtained without money and without price. It is not to be bargained for. It is furnished at the sole expense of asking. And hence among other reasons its rejection. The prayer of faith is an expedient far too artless and unostentatious. It accords not with the vanity, the pride, the ambition of our fallen nature. But had it comported with the divine will to require some one great and glorious exploit; I care not how repugnant to the feelings, how irksome to flesh and blood; there would arrive in the life of almost every sinner a period, when he would willingly forego every scruple, and gladly comply with the requisition.

I will confine myself to a single example, and it shall be selected for the very reason, that it involves the greatest of all present extremities. For what is dearer than life? With what tenacity do we cling to it. With what reluctance do we yield it up. Imagine then, that Almighty God had demanded its voluntary relinquishment. That to enjoy his smiles, and participate in the bliss of his heaven, it were previously requisite to commit the act of self-de-

struction. How few would hesitate to avail themselves of this sovereign remedy for all the ills of life. Revolting as it now appears: Dreadful as our impressions are of rushing unbidden into the presence of our Maker: Only let it be announced, as the sole medium of obtaining the rewards of eternity; so announced, as to remove every doubt in relation to its authenticity, and I will venture to assert, that the world would soon lose the larger proportion of its numbers. It would constitute, that "great thing," to which the Syrian leper would have proudly resorted, when he indignantly rejected the idea of "dipping seven times in Jordan," of merely washing himself in order to become clean. And why? There would be heroism in the thought. There would be magnanimity in the sacrifice. There would be a noble, what men would term a high-minded imitation of the pretended worthies of Greek and Roman story. And this would nerve the arm, and steel the heart. It would sound well in human annals to be able to merit heaven; to be able, by the perpetration of one bold and daring act, to storm the strait gate, and win the crown of glory. But to pray: To bend the stubborn knee, and the yet more stubborn spirit: To believe in Jesus: To look unto him as the meritorious cause of human redemption, renouncing self and exalting the Lord our righteousness. All this is ill adapted to feed the pride, and bloat the vanity of man. He sighs for renown. He would scale the fortress, into which he would disdain to creep. He has no objection to live forever; but immortality must be gained, as the Macedonian bore away the peerless diadem of the East.

Nor is the gospel less adverse to the sensual desires of his nature. It opposes its veto to sins of every description, to those, that pollute the body, as well as those, that enslave the soul. And here is a difficulty, a vexatious grievance against which mortals ever have, and I am afraid ever will, protest as a violent encroachment upon their natural appetites and passions. They might possibly strive to believe, if belief were all-sufficient. But to strive to mortify all their members, to withstand every temptation, to "lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset them;" to do this is indeed cutting against the grain, it is rowing against the rapid stream, it is equivalent to lopping off the arm, or plucking out the eye. They pronounce it a yoke too intolerable to be worn. They perceive not its necessity. "The natural man receiveth not the

things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." Talk to him of the vileness and the loathsomeness of sin, and he answers, that it is pleasant to the eyes, agreeable to the palate, and grateful to the touch. Tell him in reply, that carrion itself becomes a dainty morsel in the beak of a buzzard, and he is not abashed, he is not confounded by an analogy to the fidelity of which every Christian is ready to subscribe. But beaten in the argument, he still argues on. The senses are to him a better guide, than either reason or experience, the voice of conscience or the word of God. They all affirm of sensuality, that the end thereof is gall to the stomach and rotteness to the bones. But he scorns to apprehend what he does not feel. It will be time enough to give up pleasure, when it gives up him; to surrender of necessity, and not of choice.

Yes, Brethren, the gate of heaven is too **STRAIT** to admit the passage of a sensualist. He cannot crowd through with one darling vice attached to his person, and therefore he prefers to loiter without, therefore an obstacle is presented to his entrance, which, not all the promises, nor all the threatenings of the gospel, can prevail upon him to overcome. In vain does eternity smile upon the one hand, and frown upon the other. He is neither lured by visions of bliss, nor terrified by prospects of misery. He strives, but it is upon the broad road that leads to destruction. Here are no difficulties. Here are facilities enough and to spare. But when he has arrived at the end of his race, he will find, that although the descent to hell has been ever so smooth, there is neither downy bed, nor **silken fetters** within its fearful abodes.

In commencing a few observations upon the second branch of the discourse, it is necessary to premise, that there is a class of sinners, less corrupt and hardened, who flatter themselves with the conviction that they are striving to fulfil the requisition of the text. Are they then to be considered as having approximated the portal it describes? More important still: Are they universally destined to enter in? Our blessed Saviour resolves the inquiry in these words of solemn and alarming import, "Many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." In endeavouring to account for this, I shall submit no verbal analysis of the difference existing between striving and seeking. I am indeed satisfied that the words are used as synonyms. They mean the same thing.

and clearly show that it is very possible to come to a fearful end, although the skies are clear, and the sun shines, and the fondest anticipations beguile the soul. I have already adverted to these, as among the causes, to the facilities which cluster upon the broad road, and that assume every Proteus form and chameleon hue, lest the hapless victim should be diverted from their pursuit, and by any means turn his back upon them.

One among the number is of this nature. The sinner is frequently to be found travelling in that fatal path entirely unconscious of his real condition. It is thus when his salvation is supposed to depend upon the mere principles of worldly wisdom. In conformity to its dictates, the servant is entitled to his wages, the physician to his fee, the statesman to the emoluments of his office. And a similar process of reasoning is applied to the concerns of eternity. Its rewards are anticipated on the ground of personal desert. The good works of this life are thought to purchase an indefeasible right to the inheritance of the saints in light. But what a wretched perversion of holy scripture must this be, when its language is so clear and perspicuous, that he who runs may read: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." "After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us." "When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: We have done that which was our duty to do."

There is indeed not one single passage in the bible, that will fairly admit of a different construction. And how loose must be the theology of that man, how passionless his love, how cold and inanimate the pretended warmth of his gratitude, who purposely excludes a Saviour from being the sole meritorious cause of his redemption; who receives him for a Prophet, but rejects him, as a Priest offering his own body upon the tree, a sacrifice for all. Moses would be entitled to equal praise; for he also was a prophet and a lawgiver. And has it come to this, that Moses is as much our Saviour as Christ? Is it nothing to have veiled his divinity in a servant's form? Is it nothing for him to have been "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief?" Is it nothing to have died as never man died, treading the wine-press of the wrath of God, and then enduring the col-

lected weight and burden of all human guilt? Surely, Brethren, there must have been some necessity for the infliction of this unparalleled suffering, or it would never have transpired. "Surely" as Isaiah prophetically announced "he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows;" "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

Tell me not then of the sinner having ceased from his downward career, who overlooks these essential features of the mystery of godliness. He is only following the multitude. He may have certain virtues, such virtues as may challenge the applause of the world. But the grace required in the gospel, he has it not. Of this best furniture of the soul, he is destitute; for grace proceedeth of faith, that faith which elevates Christ to be King in Zion, the Saviour of his people, the hope and the consolation of Israel. I may love the tyrant, who spares my life; but in the estimation of others, he will be a tyrant still. The world may be much indebted to sinners, who cultivate gentle manners and evince philanthropick feelings, and there are many such; but in the estimation of that God, who exacts unfeigned faith in his Son, who demands that every moral and religious duty should be performed in the name, which is above every other name, they will be sinners still. To profit him, to make him our debtor, transcends all the labour of our hands and head. If we would be saved, we must consequently take salvation as a free gift ordained and bestowed for the worthy sake and merits of our august Redeemer.

Others again are actually journeying on the broad road owing to another kindred facility, which it affords. Contrary to the experience of those, who adhere to the narrow way, it admits of their reconciling the well known incongruity of serving two masters. One while, they are all for Christ. From their expressions, you would think, that his was the only liberty in which they delighted. To their eyes, he is the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley: to their taste, sweeter than honey and the honey-comb: to their souls, the heavenly manna and the bread of life. At another, trace them throughout their intercourse with their fellow men, and their practice will soon appear to be at open variance with their professions. They can defraud a little, and prevaricate a little, and slander more. They can rival the worst lover of the world in selfish

feelings, morose passions, and sordid habits. They can do much for the souls, but nothing for the bodies of the poor. They can wear their livery untarnished on the sabbath, but in the course of the week, it is soiled, and polluted, and spotted with sin. They can pray in the presence of assembled multitudes, but they pray not, where God hath promised to behold in secret, and afterwards to reward openly. They can give good advice, but in point of example, they are not followers of Paul, as he also was a follower of Christ. And what is the consequence? In vain do they think to seek and to serve him, whom they profess to love. He is not caught by words. He is not propitiated by the melody of sounding brass or tinkling cymbal. He insists upon a residence within. His admonition is, "My son, give me thine heart;" not the moiety only, but thine whole heart; my throne must occupy its centre; my sceptre must extend over all its ramifications; else will I reject your outward sighs and tears, your most solemn appeals for mercy. Ye must enter my kingdom altogether cleansed, or the sentence of eternal exclusion shall separate us forever.

Another facility connected with the broad road to hell, and favouring the continuance of the sinner with the crowded throng of its votaries, is this, its counsels are the counsels of procrastination. Such is the language it ever holds out to its travellers, and predisposed as they naturally are to its reception, they are easily persuaded to connive at its falsehood. If they seek a fortune, they commence early. If they strive to obtain intellectual pre-eminence, it is not at the close of a long life of ignorance. But if they are called upon to seek and strive for experimental religion, although it should be the first object to engross their thoughts, it is with many, probably with far the larger proportion of nominal Christians, the very last. Not being absolutely essential to their present existence, it is easily deferred to the period of sickness and disease, of age and infirmity. But you need not be surprised, if the full-blown sinner upon a dying bed should prove incapable of making his calling and election sure. Is this a time for vigorous efforts of the understanding, for cordial exercises of the heart? Who would not flinch at the cannon's mouth? Who would not be startled unexpectedly driven to the brink of a precipice? Do you think, that the old man, with a mind attenuated as his frame, and habits rigid as his muscles, will find the evening of his life as well adapted as the morning to

reconciliate the divine mercy? Who would not trim the quivering lamp on the eve of being involved in darkness? Who would not pour a little oil into its socket, if that little could convert eternal night, into eternal day? Alas, Brethren, under such circumstances, the descent into hell is more than easy, it is almost certain. If indeed our God was like unto man; if he was not beyond all comparison rich in mercy and plenteous in forgivenesses, the eleventh hour, whether produced by sickness or by age, would always prove a most fatal hour. In all such cases he would literally laugh at the calamity of the sinner, and mock when his fear cometh. And even as it is, "gracious and merciful" as he is, "slow to anger, and of great kindness," and a God that "repenteth him of the evil;" even now, it is seriously to be apprehended of the multitudes brought to this extremity, that "many be called but few chosen." They strive, but it is the strife of a drowning man. They repent, but it is the repentance of fear. They believe, but it is the belief of those, who "believe and tremble." I know that there may be exceptions. I know, that early impressions and serious thoughts, existing for a length of time, may be brought to maturity and fully ripened just as the spirit takes its everlasting flight. But to rest secure and unagitated upon this presumption indicates excessive weakness and credulity. The most, that persons in this condition can do, is to hope: While Christians of a longer life of faith and obedience are certain. They have no final apprehensions, no ultimate misgivings of the soul. As a general rule, to seek effectually is therefore to seek betimes: To strive to enter in, at the last, is to strive against time and tide, against experience, and against conviction.

I might enlarge. Having confined myself to the more reputable classes of offenders, I might advert to others; I might seize upon numerous topicks all tending to illustrate the fact of there being so many facilities on "the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death;" so many presented by the attractions, amusements, and grosser vices of this world, and all of them materially aided in their seductive properties, by the evil imaginations and sensual desires of the heart, that the innumerable throng of sinners is sadly proportioned to the width of "the wide gate," and the breadth of "the broad way." But brevity compels me to desist. Many there be, who never think of seeking or striving in another direction; or

if they do, they miserably fail, because they seek not, they strive not, in humble conformity to the will of God.

In drawing to a conclusion, the remarks to be submitted are obvious. You must, Brethren, embrace religion now, even to-day; to-morrow is to be regarded as the dream of ideots, and its promises the scorn of the wise. You do not defer to that period the reception of your temporal food. Why then, that which is spiritual? Is the body of more value than the soul, the scabbard than the sword, the vault than the gold it contains? You must embrace it with all your heart. To love in part is to hate in part. To be for Christ in one thing, and for Belial in another, shows that he reigns not Lord Paramount in your affections; that he is not, in your eyes, what he is represented to be in the scriptures, "over all, God blessed forever." You must consequently bear true allegiance to the Cross in all things, in your thoughts, in your words, and in your actions. You must embrace all its doctrines, and you must practise all its duties. Striving to believe, you must employ your reason to understand, and not to add to or to subtract from the scriptures; to invent new forms of doctrines or to explode those, which have grown old, from having stood the test of ages. "For what if some" will "not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?" Do you imagine, that it can alter the dimensions of the strait gate and the narrow way? Will they be enlarged in order to gratify the fastidiousness of an infidel? Is God so much in want of his future services, the services of him who hesitates not to deny the Lord that bought him, as to strike down the postern of heaven, and admit within its blessed mansions the spirit of distrust, and heresy, and unbelief? Not thus have I studied the character of God. Not thus has he revealed himself in holy oracles. "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not, shall be damned."

Again, Brethren, striving to obey, you must make the performance of one duty instrumental to the performance of another and another. Not one of them is to be despised, not one of them to be rejected. The same prerogative and authority pervade all. The same Being, who wrote the first, hath written all the commandments. If you break one, there is a sense in which you break the whole. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." Strait as is the gate, not less strait

is the law; and would you enter there? You must strive to "be perfect and entire, wanting nothing;" to be "without spot and blameless;" to be resolute and persevering unto the day of Christ, "lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."

For motives, I present you, on the one hand, with the best and the fairest recorded in the book of life. I present you with heaven; and if ye have any just conception of what heaven is, I need name no more, to call out all the energies of the spirit, soul, and body, with the view of making it your own. While here below, the Christian is "afflicted;" but there he is "comforted." Here he has enemies to contend with; "there the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary are at rest." Here he "sees through a glass darkly," he only "knows in part," there he shall see "face to face," he "shall know even as he also is known." Here, at his best estate, he merely tastes the streams; there he shall bathe and fill the enraptured soul in the fountain of eternal joy.

I present you, on the other hand, with everlasting woe escaped, with everlasting death deprived of its victim. Enter in at the strait gate, persevere upon the narrow way; and ye shall never realize those dreadful miracles, the corrosion of the worm, that destroys without destroying; the vengeance of the fire, that consumes without consuming. I know not how others may calculate to endure such tortures. I know not how they can possibly content themselves in the service of a master, who will then become the chief instrument in inflicting agonies unutterable upon many, that are now seduced by his arts, and charmed with his blandishments. But this I know, in relation to my office and ministry, that I will not cease to warn impenitent sinners "to flee from the wrath to come." I will not cease to implore the Lord, that "strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man," I may have grace and power to put them upon their guard, and, if it seemeth good to him, effectually preserve them from the assaults of the most subtle, as he is the most fatal enemy of human happiness. God is "not willing that any should perish," Christ is not willing, and his faithful ambassadors are not willing. We must not, Brethren, we cannot consent to be "saying, peace, peace; when there is no peace." It would be more than either your pleasure or your displeasure is worth. It would expose us to the severe rebuke, "they have healed

the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly." Especially when there is a cure, a sovereign and never failing cure. It proceeds from the great Physician of souls. Would to God, that I could prevail upon you to adopt it. Would to God, that ye would this day commence in good earnest that striving for holiness and against sin, which will not only heal the wounds of your peace, but command an entrance into life eternal.

So full, so free, so unrestricted, are the means of grace, that, provided you employ them precisely in the manner of God's appointment, there is no reason to despair of a successful result. What if the enemy be vigilant and artful? By the divine blessing, ye shall prove more than a match for his untiring eye and cunning stratagems. What if the gate be confessedly strait, and the way narrow? There is enough in prayer to vanquish every obstacle; there is "help laid upon One that is mighty." "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds: Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." And this, may our heavenly Father of his infinite mercy grant; may we so strive and seek, that we may gain an entrance into the blissful regions, where he dwells; and to Him, the Father, to the Son, and Holy Ghost, three persons and one God, shall be ascribed all honour, and glory, and dominion, and power, world without end. AMEN

SERMON XXV.

I CORINTHIANS vii. 29, 30, 31.

But this I say, Brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

WE often hear of the brevity of human life: How rapidly the moments glide in swift succession down the stream of time: How narrow are the boundaries of the days of the Son of Man: With what velocity manhood and age steal upon the scarcely conscious traveller to remind him, that his days are fast verging to the house appointed for all the living. On this subject the scriptures are eminently beautiful and sublime. "Our days on earth are as a shadow." They "are swifter than a weaver's shuttle." "They are passed away as the swift ships; as the eagle that hasteth to the prey." "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down." "His days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth: For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more." "For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

And yet, when we have strangely, and I may add, almost miraculously escaped all the perils incident to infancy and youth; when we have survived the prime of life, and find ourselves quietly reposing in the vale of years, it would seem as if the retrospect of the past presented a long and lengthened period, on which to exercise the recollecting powers of the mind. To the man of fourscore years, it appears an age since he was young. He can by no process in numbers bring to a point the intervening hours, and days, and months. He feels that he is old. His gray hairs, his furrowed cheeks, his decrepit limbs, all combine to tell him, that they have

not been wrought in the twinkling of an eye, ere he could look around, and gain some little knowledge of himself, his nature, the powers of his body, and the faculties of his soul. His memory is rather surcharged with numerous thoughts resulting from numerous events. Though the passing moments flew, the years still lingered on, and many an octogenarian has been known to confess, that he was weary of the world, that having outlived the friends and companions of his youth, he would gladly lie down in the dust, and be no more remembered.

It is consequently in a relative point of view alone, that the Apostle assures us, "the time is short." Compared with the ephemeral existence of many insects, with the brief space allotted to most animals, with the transient blossoms of the infant dead, it is long, surpassing long. But if weighed in the balance against many other circumstances, those of a truly imposing character, it becomes short, emphatically short as any dream. Its uncertainty is one. We know not what a day may bring forth. The work we have to perform is another. The poor man does not think of personal aggrandizement; the illiterate do not calculate upon attaining literary renown; I had almost said, the wicked do not flatter themselves with realizing the hopes of the righteous, after they are old. These expectations are rather thought to attach to an earlier age, to that springtide in the affairs of men, which "once neglected never floods again." And then, eternity is a third and undeniable proof of the shortness of human life. Compared with this, we have ample reason to adopt the words of the psalmist, and say, "Behold, thou hast made my days as a hand-breadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee: Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity." There is nothing long but the duration to be spent in heaven or hell. All else is a mathematical point upon a line, that has neither beginning nor end. We can glide with the swiftness of thought from the day of our birth to the day of our death; but to grasp the idea of eternity belongs to God alone.

You perceive therefore the true meaning of all those passages of the sacred volume, which circumscribe to a unit the passing shadows of the world. If there were nothing beyond the grave, if the soul died with the body, entirely irresponsible for its actions, whether good or bad, existence would be measured solely by our present conceptions of time, and would be either long or short, in the pro-

portion, we were permitted to dwell upon the face of the earth. But as it is, in view of those revelations from heaven, which inform us that it never dies; that it is immortal and eternal, as its Maker is immortal and eternal, no truth can be more clear and convincing than that advanced by the Apostle, "This I say, Brethren, the time is short." The day of probation will soon be over. You have a little while, in which to prepare to meet your God. "The night cometh, when no man can work." "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation;" and exactly as it is improved or unimproved, so will an eternity of happiness or of misery convince you, that short is of all others the epithet most characteristic of the transient scenes of life, including the virtues and vices exhibited by our frail mortality.

Let us attend then with seriousness and solemnity to the inferences suggested by St. Paul, and fully persuaded of their importance, by them, so regulate our lives and conduct, that whether we live or die, we may live or die unto the Lord. It remaineth, he tells us, in the first place, "that they that have wives be as though they had none." And permit me to say, there are few passages more clearly indicative of the supreme value of religion. For where is the earthly relation possessing attractions sufficient to eclipse the marriage tie? If I remember right, it has been aptly and justly termed "the sweetener of life, the solderer of society." It gives character to youth, dignity to manhood, new life and animation to age. They, who have been long united, whose dispositions and feelings were cast in the same mould, whose hearts have been knit into one, whose minds have constantly reflected each other's sentiments and virtues, whose union has been crowned with what the psalmist calls the "heritage of the Lord;" if they are not happy, then in the language of the misanthrope is all temporal happiness the merest bubble in existence. There is no place for love, for tenderness, for sympathy. There is no moral magnet to attract. There are no congenial hearts to be attracted.

But in opposition to all this, that divine Being, who knew what was in man; who needed not that any should tell him his most secret thoughts; he, himself has pronounced the highest eulogium upon the marriage institution. He has selected it as the emblem of all others best adapted to convey an adequate idea of the fervency of his affection to the children of men. In the economy of our re-

demption, he is the Bridegroom, and the Church is the Bride: "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." Does the Apostle then enjoin upon those that have wives, and of course upon those that have husbands, to be as though they had none? Oh how inestimably valuable must be that religion, which in the contrast impoverishes these endearing relations, and throws them into the shade: which holds up to view a nobler prize, and unveils an infinitely richer source of happiness to mortal eyes and hearts. He does not mean, that the married are to renounce their mutual affection. He does not intend to contradict what he elsewhere inculcates, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it." But his object is fully explained in the succeeding verses. In his time, whatever may be the fact with us, there existed this remarkable distinction to the prejudice of marriage and in favour of celibacy; "He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife." And to this he objects, this preference of the finite, to the Infinite. He had himself, "whether in the body," "or whether out of the body," he "could not tell; he had himself been "caught up into paradise," and having witnessed its unspeakable glories, he did not hesitate to regard their acquisition far beyond the highest of all earthly enjoyments. He rather "counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord." In comparison of this, even the nuptial tie lost its powerful charm; it ceased to deserve the first place in the human heart, and faded into relative insignificance.

Nor can we upon serious reflection for a moment refuse to agree with him. I will take the happiest pair surrounded by the happiest family on which the sun has ever shone; they shall reciprocate each other's love to a degree outvying the tenderness of the wedded dove; and still, What is their happiness, when contrasted with the happiness of heaven? To say nothing of the vast difference in point of intensity, it is sufficient to remark, that in the one case, it is begun, continued, and ended here; in the other, it is everlasting; it has a commencement, but it has no end; "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore." How vain and fallacious then to

surrender the hope of their possession even at the fairest of all earthly shrines. Particularly when we consider the uncertainty attending every thing human. How often have the fondest ties been rudely snapt in twain! How early has the blooming bride been consigned to the mouldering tomb! How abruptly have parents been required to mourn the loss of their smiling babes! And deaf to these agonizing lessons of instruction, shall we continue to dote upon our fleeting idols, heedless of every thing else, reckless of the value, the welfare, and the happiness of the undying soul? No, no: We may love them, tenderly and affectionately love them. It is our duty, and praised be God, our duty is never at variance with the best feelings and inclinations of the heart. But still we must love them as though we had none; as though they were to be removed from our sight at a moment's warning; as though we were widowed and childless, without one link of a chain to fetter the soul, and prevent it from "seeking those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." In a word, we must love them in decided subserviency to the love of God; to the love of that gracious Being, who, with more affection than ever belonged to husband or wife, parent or child, came to redeem and save us; came, while we were yet sinners, to bleed and die, that we might be exalted to those pure regions, where "they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God."

It remaineth, in the second place, that "they that weep be as though they wept not." That there are numerous sources of affliction in the world is too evident to be denied. We have all felt them. In some shape or other, to some degree or other, distress and even anguish of mind have been the lot of every individual, who has arrived at the years of maturity. He is either poor, and forced to "eat the bitter bread of misery;" or sick and infirm, with sleepless nights to follow days of languishment and pain; or exempted from penury and disease, he has been bereft of what the heart held most dear; his home has been invaded by the tyrant death, and tears have been made to flow over ruined hopes, and worldly prospects forever blasted. Is it possible then to weep, as though he wept not; as though there were something in reserve, enough to still the voice of his complaint, and induce him to bear up manfully against the swelling surges of calamity? Yes, Brethren, to the praise and honour of our most holy faith, be it spoken, there is in religion a speci-

sick for every sorrow, a balm for every wound. It does not indeed insist, that we should never sigh, never drop the scalding tear; for Christ himself both sighed and wept. He sighed for the hardness of the multitude, and weeping at the tomb of Lazarus, in this manner consecrated one of the most tender and natural impulses connected with our humanity.

And yet, to the piously afflicted of every class and station, there is a large share of comfort to be drawn from the consideration appealed to, by the Apostle; "The time is short." Are they poor and needy? The hour is at hand, when "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more;" when the cold winds of winter will no longer search their tattered garb; when the manifold ills of poverty will be joyfully exchanged for "treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." Are they beset with pain? Are they weighed down with sickness? So was the holy Job, so the wretched Lazarus. But now they are comforted, and soon shall it be thus with them,

"Sickness and death shall both agree

"To bring" them, "Lord, at last to thee."

Are they in the number of those, who mourn the departure of beloved friends and relatives? "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren," says the Apostle, "concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." A little while, and there will be no barrier to intervene between them and the lamented dead. A little while, and they will have the inexpressible felicity of being reunited to their surviving spirits, to part no more. If such then are the consolations attending the hope of the gospel, see you not, that Christians have every reason to weep, as though they wept not; as though they were already invested with "beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Surely it is in this aspect, that we must all concur in celebrating the divine goodness and compassion. No murmurings, no repinings should mingle with the sorrows of the righteous. The time is short, for weeping; but there is a long eternity, in which to rejoice and be glad; a long eternity, in which the spirits of those, that were endeared upon earth, will be happy in each other's society forever and ever.

It remains, in the third place, that "they that rejoice be as though they rejoiced not." An inference including, as I apprehend, the

case of all those, who are highly elated with the prosperity, which attends them, whether it be in relation to their health, their fortune, or their vices. Strange, when the world is perpetually turning its back upon its votaries, and dismissing them from the stage of action; strange, with so many examples before their eyes of a complete reverse of circumstances: strange, that they should still exult and revel, as if they were to exult and revel forever. It might be thought, that the many admonitions of the scriptures, united to personal observation, would long since have proved too hard for the transgressor, and have taught him to understand and consider his latter end. Take for example the severe irony of the royal preacher. "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." But alas, it is not thus. There is no such redeeming spirit to repress the gay illusions of youth, of affluence, of pleasure. As the world was, so it continues to be. The time is short. We are ever treading upon the margin of the tomb. We are literally crowding each other into the land of silence; and still there are mirth, and revelry, and song; still the cry is, I am young, I am strong, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." The good old fashioned scripture is derided, which saith. "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to heart." Sooner or later, however, they will "be afflicted, and mourn and weep: their laughter will be turned to mourning, and their joy to heaviness." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

It behooves us therefore, Brethren, to rejoice as though we rejoiced not. In other words, to be "transformed by the renewing of our minds;" sensible that, while we continue in a state of sin, we have no real cause for joy or self-gratulation; that we ought not to be dazzled by the glare of surrounding objects, nor suffer ourselves for one single moment to forget, that we are mortal and perishing, that we are moral and accountable beings. If there be a person on the face of the earth, whose whole character requires to be changed

before his features can with propriety assume a joyous complexion, it is the gay and thoughtless, the licentious and voluptuous sinner. If there be one, whose countenance may always wear the smile of peace and happiness, it is the faithful, pious, and obedient Christian.

Similar remarks apply to the next inference drawn by the Apostle: It remaineth, that "they that buy be as though they possessed not." The desire of accumulating wealth is coeval with our history. "The love of money" is pronounced to be "the root of all evil." And yet, there are few among us, who can lay their hands upon their hearts, and with a clear conscience exclaim, I have enough and to spare. We are rather all of us more or less inclined to increase our worldly substance. And certainly, when that inclination is controlled by fair views and proper motives, it is laudable, just, and right, beneficial to ourselves and families, to our country and the world. But what are those motives? We must not "trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God." We are not to "join house to house," and "lay field to field," as if life were bestowed with no higher object to engross our time and talents. We are not to be so careful and busy about the things that perish, as to neglect those that are imperishable and eternal. We are to bear in mind, that let our riches be ever so great, they will never supply the place of the "pearl of great price;" that God is not so poor, as to be susceptible of a bribe; that the crown of glory is not an article of merchandise set up at auction, and affording an opportunity to the highest bidder to purchase the salvation of his soul. But this blessed consummation, following in the train of a well-spent life, is to be gained by estimating our temporal concerns exceeding cheap in comparison of eternity. In this sense it is, that they who buy are to be as though they possessed not. They are to live under the solemn conviction, that they are about to die, that the time is short, in which the largest fortune can be called their own, and the period constantly approaching nearer and nearer, when they must bid a long farewell to their earthly possessions; when they will receive more real heartfelt satisfaction, in bearing away to another and a better world, the testimony of an approving conscience, than was ever enjoyed by the whole host of misers, in the midst of the greatest revenues gathered without right, and hoarded up without mercy or compassion, without ever abstracting a cent to relieve the sick, to feed the hungry, or clothe the naked.

The last inference adopted by the Apostle is this, It remaineth, that "they that use this world be as not abusing it." From which we learn, in opposition to men of severe and contracted views, that the world and all that it contains, sin only excepted, is worthy of the goodness and benevolence of Him, who created it. It is adapted to our wants, to our innocent gratifications, to all that portion of happiness, which the wise and good are permitted to enjoy beneath the canopy of heaven. They, who are forever disparaging it, little think how much they vainly attempt to detract from the wisdom of its Author, how perversely they confound its accidental with its natural properties. These last always deserve our warmest admiration. They were ordered in love, and are opulent in blessings. After finishing the work of creation, "God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good." St. Paul contends that "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving." And so in relation to all inanimate substances, to the whole universe, with its beauty, its order, its harmony, its usefulness, these all proclaim in letters traced by a sunbeam,

"The hand that made us is divine."

The great misfortune is, that the tenantry of this world are too apt to employ their ingenuity in educing evil out of good. They divert to sinful purposes those objects, which were designed to confer a blessing upon our race. Wine for instance was intended to cheer the heart of man, not to intoxicate him; the various kinds of food to sustain his body in health and vigour, not to convert him into a glutton. And thus I might proceed in running the distinction between the use and the abuse of every thing. There is nothing sinful, because it is beautiful to the eye or melodious to the ear; because it is delicious to the taste or redolent to the smell. A richly variegated landscape is as harmless, as a barren waste; the warbling musick of the groves, as the grating discord of an instrument out of tune; I am for luscious, not insipid fruit; for aromatick, not mephitick plants. It is only when we pervert the good gifts of God to unhallowed practices, that "sin lieth at the door." It is only against this perversion, this wretched and ungrateful abuse of them, that the Apostle cautions us in the words of the text. And to profit by his instruction, it is necessary, that we should be temperate in all things; that we should keep our bodies in subjec-

tion, and impose proper restrictions upon our appetites and passions. When they would fain usurp the mastery over reason; when they would lead us astray, and entice us to tread on forbidden ground; we should sit down and deliberately count the cost; see where the advantage, where the disadvantage lies; what blessings centre on the narrow, what evils throng the broad way, that leadeth to destruction. It is by a calm and dispassionate investigation of these things, that we shall ever find the path of duty to be the path of happiness. The best mode of enjoying the world is to use it in such a manner, as to be prepared at all times to dismiss it, without a sigh of reluctance, or a pang of regret.

We should do this, among other reasons, for that assigned by St. Paul, "the fashion of this world passeth away;" because we have here "no continuing city, but we seek one to come." Pass some few months or years, and all the delightful scenes, which now interest can interest no more. To the clay cold corpse despoiled of its spirit, it will afford no gratification, that there are musick and dancing on the earth, or eating and drinking, or marrying and giving in marriage; that beauty has its worshippers, talent its admirers, perfidious pleasure its unsuspecting dupes. But if that spirit departed hence in the Lord; if it had previously accomplished all the good work of grace, in singleness of heart, in purity of purpose, in holiness of faith and obedience; oh! how happy will it be in the practical conviction, that the death of the body has proved the life of the soul; that it has "clean escaped" from the pollutions of the world, and is safely landed upon those blissful shores, where no arts of the tempter, no seductions of the wicked, no risings of natural corruption, can ever disturb its residence, or jeopardize its everlasting felicity.

Be advised therefore, Brethren, to covet earnestly this blessed termination to what has been termed the fashion of the world. It is not for me to search your bosoms, and identify the individuals to whom the language of the Apostle attaches with the greatest force and significancy. It is enough that you yourselves must be conscious where your heart and your treasure is. Whether ye are the children of your heavenly Father or not. Whether ye are penitent or impenitent sinners. Whether ye are already born again, or are still devoted to the beggarly elements of the world. On this subject, there can be no great room for doubt. There is a monitor

within, that, in your respective cases, freely resolves the question, whether ye are prepared or unprepared to die. Should it decide against you, oh! let me persuade the sinner no longer to linger in those thorny paths of sin, whose wages is death, eternal death. The time is short. To all of us, it is short. To some perchance, so very brief, that this may be the last sermon, the last admonition, they will ever hear. How appropriate then would be the solemn annunciation of the prophet to one of the kings of Judah, "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live:" How applicable the fervent prayer of the psalmist, "O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more."

It is indeed a serious thing for the wicked man to die. He may well tremble at the thought. He may well shrink with horror from the reality. But in the case of the truly righteous, he can say with Paul, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Be wise therefore, "while it is called to-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Be wise to emulate him in his career of faith and holiness, that ye may enjoy his hopes and consolations in your hour of utmost need. And may Almighty God, in his infinite compassion, send home these truths, "in demonstration of the spirit and of power," to your several hearts. While here in the world, "only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ," and when its fashion shall have passed away; may the same good angels, that ministered to the holy Jesus, after his hour of agony, bear you in triumph to the paradise of God; may the light and the glory of heaven at length dawn upon your ravished souls; may the God of grace prove the strength of all our hearts, and our portion forever. AMEN.

SERMON XXVI.

ACTS xxvi. 8.

Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?

THIS was the question addressed by Paul to King Agrippa, and was at that time so far from being considered susceptible of the smile of incredulity, that, to the whole triumphant vindication of the doctrine of Christ, the royal listener was compelled to reply, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Paul answered and said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." The interrogatory itself has been adopted, as the foundation of the ensuing discourse, with views similar to those of the holy Apostle, and because I am aware, that, in the existing age of the world, arguments of no equivocal or conjectural character are requisite in order to convince the gainsayer, to convert the unconverted, and "turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just."

So far indeed as my acquaintance embraces the pious and the good, the truly faithful in Christ Jesus, I have observed little attention paid to the mere decoration of the body. While decorum is consulted, and eccentricity avoided, they yet contrive to keep it in subjection; they sedulously endeavour to remove every impediment, that may obstruct the ascent of their souls heavenward: agreeably to the inspired declaration, "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." And still, they look forward in serene and joyful expectation to the period of its ultimate resurrection from the grave. With emotions of unfeigned pleasure, they anticipate the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven, "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

Sinners on the contrary, I refer principally to the gay and fashionable, the dissipated and the voluptuous, the freethinking and skept-

feal sinners are perpetually devising new methods of adorning their persons, of pampering their appetites, or ministering to their more sensual indulgencies. With them, the body is every thing. It is nursed with the utmost care. It is gratified in all its natural passions and propensities. It is literally idolized. But after its death, they affect to think and to talk about it, with philosophick calmness; to cast it off as an old garment no longer worthy the supervision of its owner, as a fetid mass of filth and corruption rapidly incorporating with the earth as it was, and as no more susceptible of new life and activity, than as the particles of a decayed vegetable may reappear in the flowers of the garden, or the green herbage of the field. But to persons of this description, persons thus arrogantly bold and free in denying the truth of God's most holy word, I present with confidence the question originally propounded to King Agrippa, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?"

Let us examine the subject with reference to the divine power. We know from the nature of things, that effects must be traced to their causes, and surveying the earth we inhabit, with the broad expanse of heaven, sparkling with innumerable orbs of light, with brilliants more beautiful than the gems of the East, the conclusion is irresistibly forced upon the mind, that there must have been some original, self-existent cause of all this handiwork, this wonderful mechanism surpassing all the ingenuity of man to fathom, much more to imitate. And having recourse to God, we almost intuitively pronounce of him, that he hath created and formed it; that he hath set his broad seal upon the face of the universe, giving laws to matter and to motion, and so constructing the wheels of nature, that they continue to roll along unimpaired by friction, and unwasted by years. We pronounce of him, that he has created and formed these bodies of ours, so curiously wrought, so inextricably woven together in their parts, that no artist can rival the workmanship, and breathe into the nostrils of the most beautiful waxen image, the breath of life.

Ask your own consciences then, ye who are disposed to deery the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, ask your own consciences, if a Being thus magnificent in design, and omnipotent in execution cannot recompose what he alone has permitted to decompose; cannot redeem from the dust of death, that life of the

body, which his own plastick word first taught to play in our lungs, to dance through our veins, and throb around our hearts. You might as well with Berkeley deny all matter, and with Priestly all spirit. You might as well, with the fool in the scriptures, deny that there is a God, ay or a man that is born or a man that is dead. For once admit, that there is a power to make alive, and the inference is not to be resisted, that the same power can make alive again. In the interim, I care not where the soul is, where the body is. He, who originally joined them together, can join them anew. The labour is not more onerous, the manner more intricate or embarrassing. To found the universe includes the ability to regulate it. To do all things indeed, which in themselves do not involve a manifest contradiction.

Nor is it incredible, that God should be able to raise the dead, in consequence of any supposed difficulties thrown in the way, through the subtlety of physical or metaphysical research. The questions are as old as the writings of Paul, "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" And have men refined upon these, in the pride and folly of their hearts? Have they shown, that our bodies are perpetually changing the particles of which they are composed? Do they therefore ask, if the whole of those particles are to be resuscitated, or only in part? Have they found out, that the very same materials may be transferred from one body to another, and do they therefore sneeringly inquire, in which of the bodies, each soul is to reappear at the resurrection? Precisely as the Apostle himself put to silence the cavils of the Sadducees, I reply in the spirit of that faith, which cometh by hearing and not by sight, "God will give it a body as it shall please him, and to every" soul its "own body." How, I neither know nor care. It will be done wisely and well, and that is enough for me, and I should hope for you. When you can tell me, how all the fragrance of the rose and the lily is at length locked up in their respective seeds to come forth again in their season, and scent with new odour the vernal breeze; when you can tell me, how two opposite mirrors can reflect intervening objects, multiplying them in an almost endless extent, without any obstacle being offered to the repeated transmission to and fro of the rays of light; when you can solve all this, it will be time to solve the mystery of the resurrection. In the mean while, let the scriptures control your belief of the one,

as your senses indicate, without enabling you to account for, the phenomena of the other. Those scriptures, which assert of this mortal, "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."

Incredulity upon this subject may be further checked, by considerations derived from the analogy of nature. An analogy, which the great Apostle of the Gentiles did not deem it beneath the dignity of his office to adopt, in his argument to the Corinthians, reminding them of the well known fact, "that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die." With the view then of comprehending the full force of his similitude, select an individual, if such a one could be found, entirely unacquainted with the operations of nature. Show him the seemingly perished acorn, and the human body actually deprived of life. Explain to him, that after being deposited in the ground, they will in due time reappear, the one in the tall green oak, the other in the living man; and as to a belief in either result, the smile and the feeling of incredulity will alike play upon his features, and occupy his mind. Conviction however will soon follow, as the vegetable process is commenced and unfolded, as it gradually advances to perfection. And can you show him, that this is the effect of the divine behest, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit after his kind whose seed is in itself, upon the earth?" He will have as little difficulty in crediting the same scriptures, where they assert, "Behold, I show you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; (for the trumpet shall sound;) and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." To such an individual, there would be no greater miracle in the one case, than in the other. Our hearts may be slow to believe, because they are familiar with the goodness of God in the yearly returns of seedtime and harvest. But to him, for the first time beholding the earth relaxing from the frost and snows of winter, and progressively assuming its green array and variegated tints, the wonder and astonishment would not be less effectual and sublime, than if the graves were to be opened, and the dead of forgot-

ten ages be restored to life again. To him, the power of annually renewing the face of nature would be fully equivalent to the power of renewing, once for all, the slumbering clay of the universal dead; no matter how distant the period; no matter how many revolving suns must first shed their enlivening rays, and brood as it were over the mansions of the tomb.

Blessed however be God, the arguments already adduced upon this noble theme, the arguments derived from his acknowledged power and wisdom, and from the analogy of his own fair creation, only serve to prepare the mind for the more cordial reception of a truth, already recorded in the sacred volume, already demonstrated in Spirit and in power, already manifested in the eyes of numerous unexceptionable witnesses. Jesus Christ whose testimony, as the Redeemer of the world and the Saviour of sinners, is the spirit of prophecy, and the incontrovertible sanction of miracles; Jesus-Christ, who was born into this vale of tears, who lived and died therein as a man liveth and dieth; that same Jesus, whom the Jews crucified and slew, and who previously announced, "after three days I will rise again;" that same Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

I design not, Brethren, on the present occasion to enter into the minute particulars of that stupendous event. They have been frequently rehearsed in your hearing. They must be familiar to your recollection, and to your hopes. And do you credit the siege of Troy because Homer sang; the voyage and exploits of Æneas, the remote ancestor of Rome, because Virgil tuned his Mantuan lyre? Do you credit the existence and biographical details of heroes and statesmen, because Plutarch and Nepos wrote? "Why then should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" Look at the testimony of poets and historians, conjectural for the most part, and often contradictory. And is this to be received, while that of holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, is to be discredited as romance, and rejected with disdain? Will you thus impugn and renounce the testimony of the Apostles and women, who were eyewitnesses to the fact of the resurrection; of disbelieving Thomas, who would not yield his assent, until he had thrust his hand into the side, and laid his fingers in the print of the nails, yet appearing in the hands and feet of the

risen Jesus: of more than five hundred disciples, who saw him at once; of the select band of friends and companions, who having heard him speak for forty days, of things pertaining to the kingdom of God, were at length permitted to witness his glorious ascent into heaven; in a word, the testimony of disciples, who, in his hour of agony upon the cross, all forsook him and fled, fear blanching their cheeks, and terror striking through their hearts; and yet, when fully convinced of his having risen again, as he himself had said, of disciples, who thereafter rejoiced in the opportunity to lay down their lives in his service; rejoiced, in spite of martyrdom, presented in its most cruel forms, to receive its imperishable crown, as the noblest recompense for the zeal and alacrity, with which they preached Jesus and the resurrection?

Surely, Brethren, after perusing such brilliant testimony, they, who remain incredulous and unbelieving, must write falsehood upon every page of history, falsehood upon every thing, which their own eyes have not seen, which their own ears have not heard. I would sooner pronounce of the triumphs of Alexander, that they were fable, of the brutal murder of Cæsar at the base of Pompey's statue, that it was an idle tale; ay, of the fate of Napoleon, that he died not, neither do his ashes repose amid the rocks of St. Helena. If evidence, so clear, so precise, so unequivocal and disinterested, is not to control the faith of man, then hath our great Creator left himself without a witness, when he would speak to his creatures; then hath he strangely foreclosed his power to teach and direct them, in their goings, with certainty as from him; then is that scripture remarkably fulfilled in our age, which saith, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one should rise from the dead."

The proofs of our Saviour's resurrection are however too plain and manifest to admit of such a dilemma, in the apprehension of far the larger proportion of Christendom. The strong reasons of infidelity are here inbecile and powerless as the club of a dead Hercules. Christians ever have believed, they ever will continue to believe, those proofs to the end of time. And thus believing, thus confident, as to the Captain of their salvation, the text addresses itself to them, from the mouth of an Apostle, with peculiar force and emphasis; "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?"

Yes, Brethren, with respect to those frail and perishing bodies which you now inhabit, if Christ, who was made like unto us in all things, and "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin;" if his human soul has rejoined his human body; if he has become the first fruit of the tomb; why, at some far distant day, and in God's own good time, have ye not the strongest grounds to believe, that ye will experience the like glorious change, the like glorious reanimation from the dust of death? In addition to what has been already recited, how express and imperative are those words of scripture, "Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." "Jesus said, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die." Do ye not then place full faith and confidence in these declarations? In the light of Christ's revival, do ye not regard them, as yea and amen, as truths against which the gates of hell shall not prevail, which God's own puissant arm will accomplish in the face of an assembled universe? Ye do. It would be useless to suspend my voice for a reply. Ye know, that "if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." With such of your number, as are mourners in Zion, how has the consciousness of this reviving doctrine poured its assuasive balm into your anguished souls, when the trembling hand has closed the eyelids of your little ones; when ye have printed the final kiss upon their pallid cheeks, and wept your last adieu; when parental arms, stiffened by the frost of death, have ceased to fold you within the fond caress: when the wife of your bosom, or the husband of your love, breathes not, speaks not, save as imagination lends to the sundered lips the power of apostrophizing after the manner of Job, "I have said to corruption, Thou art my father; to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister." Dismal indeed would be the house of mourning, more dismal still the place of sepulture, were it not for some soft and soothing voice, inaudibly whispering to the heart of surviving friends, we shall meet again, we shall meet to part no more. It is this, that cheers the loneliness of a bereaved home. It is this, that sprinkles the grave with diamonds, which still emit their lustre in the midst of its darkest gloom. It is the hope of a joyful resurrection, that disarms the king of ter-

tors of his power to annoy; that enables all the wise and good to exclaim in their departing hour, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

And if these, Brethren, are the consolations, these the anticipations while here below, what must be the reality? I have somewhere seen a picture representing a pious family, on the morn of the resurrection. The stone has been rolled away from the mouth of the sepulchre. Its long slumbering tenants have been roused by the sound of the last trump. Their dust has been revived. The garments of mortality have been left behind them. They burst forth at once into new life and vigour. There rises the father surrounded by the elder children, whom he had brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; there, the mother, with her smiling babes, still fondly clinging to the maternal arms. Serene and holy joy pervades every countenance. The look of mutual recognition has already passed, and all eyes are intently gazing up on high, whence also they look for the Lord Jesus Christ. But oh, what is a painter's skill, compared with the wonder working skill of God? What the most vivid sketch and colouring of his pencil, compared with that radiance from the throne of glory, which shall hereafter visit the tomb of the righteous? I have thought of the pale, softened hues of the evening; of the contrast furnished by the full-orbed splendour of the meridian sun. But it cannot, will not do. There is nothing seen on earth, or in the skies, that can impart the faintest conception of the triumphant resurrection of the just, springing forth to meet their Saviour, at his coming, with all the holy angels with him; springing forth to be ravished by his love, and to bask forever beneath the sunshine of his smiles. The very thought is rapture, and the fruition itself must be joy unspeakable and full of glory.

But alas, Brethren, what other sounds are those, which succeed to the transports of this blissful scene? The dead in Christ have risen first, and with them which were alive and remained, they have been caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And now comes, dreadful to think upon, more dreadful to realize, now comes the resurrection of the wicked. I have seen no picture attempting to embody the features of this appalling event. I can

from this source derive no aid in endeavouring to seize its more prominent traits, and describe the anguish, the horror, the unutterable despair, which shall then fasten upon the countenance of the ungodly and the sinner. I only know, that the dead, small and great, shall stand before God, and that all descriptions and classes of men will be there, to be judged out of those things, which are written in the books according to their works. I only know of them, that fear not God, and obey not the gospel of his Son, that in this tremendous hour, they shall "say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him, that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come." I only know, that vain will be their efforts at concealment, vain their loudest, their most plaintive cries for mercy. No matter, if they once numbered beloved friends and relatives among the pious; they will now desert them. No matter, if the arms of the compassionate Jesus were once widely expanded to receive them; his terrible voice will now pronounce the equally terrible sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." No matter, if God himself was once unwilling that they should perish; he will now be unto them a God of consuming fire; he will cast them, as he hath said, where they "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Is not this enough to satisfy our curiosity? Is it not enough to induce us to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, in order that we may escape this scene of terror and amazement? The doctrine of the resurrection, you perceive, has its dark and dismal, as well as its bright and joyous side. Will ye not profit by the disclosure? When your greatest bane is before you, will ye not strive to avoid it? When its heavenly antidote, will ye not embrace it, with a true heart in full assurance of hope? Oh that the sinner might be prevailed upon to pause and think, ere it be too late. No longer would the grave present the most revolting spectacle on which the mind can dwell. It would yield to that, which is to follow the grave and the resurrection. It would yield to that punishment, which God hath reserved "against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."

Weigh it then, ye who are yet in the number of the careless and impenitent, weigh it against all the combined pleasures of sin. What are they in their best estate? Passing shadows, without substance

or reality; gay and gilded lures, which cheat the soul, with delusive promises, only to bring it to a fearful end; fond and foolish dreams, which produce a feverish excitement in the brain, during the midnight hours of darkness and illusion, only to vanish, at the dawn of day before the lighted torch of truth. And for these, are ye willing to hazard your immortal interests? For these, are ye willing to live in jeopardy every hour, to die in terror, and rise again in consternation and despair? It must not, would to God, that ye might say, it shall not be. How changed would be your thoughts! How radically changed the current of your affections! Ye would determine to have nothing more to do with sin. Ye would shun it as a poison, corrosive to the taste, withering and deadly to the frame.

Repentance would be yours. Sorely would ye lament the corruption of your hearts, and the iniquity of your lives. Each act of guilt would stand out against you, prominent as the sun in the heavens. Ye would rest not, neither day nor night, until a spiritual resurrection should ensue, that would effectually relieve you from the whole body of sin and death. Faith would be yours. To Him, who bruised the serpent's head, and this day triumphed over the last enemy, ye would look with more of love and tenderness, of hope and confidence, than ever swayed the heart of a maiden, when she put on her ornaments, and decked herself for the bridal day. In your eyes, he would be altogether lovely and of good report, the chiefest of ten thousand. Ye would hail him as your Saviour and your King, the Redeemer of your souls and the Monarch of your hearts. Obedience would be yours. Nothing irksome would there be in the path of duty. Nothing tedious or offensive in the beauty of holiness. Did he call you to the Church purchased by his blood? Ye would fly with the celerity of doves to their windows. Did he invite you to the banquet of his love? Ye would hasten to receive the precious memorial of his broken flesh and bleeding veins. Ye would rejoice and be glad in every opportunity to feed upon him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

Yes, Brethren, ye would do all this with alacrity and joy. Ye would thus pass from death unto life. And what would be the consequence, the consequence of sin being dethroned from its empire and dominion over you, and Christ being highly exalted and glorified in its room? Not one sigh of regret would escape your lips. Not one pang of remorse would ruffle the calmness and serenity of your

bosoms. Your days would be crowned with blessings, and your nights with repose. Your conversation would be in heaven. Ye would have peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. All the days of your appointed time, would ye wait with patience, until your last great change should come. Do you now fear death? It would lose all its terrors in your exulting eye; its hard features and iron brow would contract the velvet smoothness of the eider's down. It would be regarded as your passport to the place, where Jesus lay; the refuge of a weary pilgrim toiling on the road to heaven, and panting for eternal life. Do ye now fear the resurrection from the dead? It would become the subject of unceasing thankfulness and praise. The eye of faith would enable you to penetrate, in some small degree, the grandeur and sublimity of that triumphant sequel to the separate existence of the long imprisoned body and soul. Ye would be enamoured with the thought of being then permitted to meet the Lord of your life, and would be induced to prepare yourselves, yet more and more, for the high honour of first beholding, and being forever after satisfied with his likeness.

I could enlarge. But if we have a just sense of our present good and everlasting peace, enough has been urged, on this joyous anniversary of our Saviour's resurrection, to prevail with every soul of man to determine, that the time past of his life has been sufficient to have wrought the will of the Gentiles. No longer will he be tempted to assert, that it is a thing incredible with him, that God should raise the dead. No longer, in pity and compassion to his own precious and immortal soul, will he delay the work of repentance, the work of faith, the work of obedience. No longer will he refuse to commemorate, with fervid love and intense emotions of gratitude, the merits and the sacrifice of his blessed Redeemer; when, in addition to the unrivalled acts of benevolence and grace, which he performed throughout the period, in which he came to visit as in great humility; when, in addition to all these,

“ The graves of all his saints he blessed
 “ when in the grave he lay;
 “ And, rising thence, their hopes he raised
 “ to everlasting day !”

AMEN.

SERMON XXVII.

ACTS xvii. 11.

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

THESSALONICA and Berea were two cities of Macedon, visited by St. Paul, during one of the missionary tours undertaken by him, in obedience to the command of Christ, and for the purpose of evangelizing the world. At the former, he had entered the synagogue of the Jews, and preached in his usually bold and intrepid manner the leading doctrines of the cross; and although "some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few;" yet the greater number of "the Jews, which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people." Whereupon the converted brethren justly alarmed for the safety of the Apostles, sent them away by night to Berea. There also upon their arrival, they immediately repaired to the synagogue of the Jews, and were so cordially received, that the inspired historian has not hesitated to pronounce upon the Bereans the ever to be remembered panegyrick, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

On the comparison here instituted, I have little to offer. Those rival cities have long since vanished from the face of the earth. Their inhabitants have gone to their long account, and character apart, it would be useless to attempt exciting your sympathies in favour of the one, or your indignation in prejudice of the other. Not so however, in relation to the grounds of that comparison. Embracing alike the spirit in which the word of life was received,

and the manner in which it was improved, they furnish a theme worthy of all acceptance; they present on the one side a model for the imitation of Christian men, in praise of which your time may well be occupied, your serious and devout attention confidently challenged.

Let me remind you then, Brethren, in the first place, of the solicitude manifested by the Bereans to learn the tenour of the Apostle's doctrine. Residing in a remote part of Greece, far from the scene of our Saviour's ministry, and entirely ignorant of the wonderful truths disclosed by him; it redounded greatly to their credit, that St. Paul found himself at once surrounded by a numerous and attentive audience. You know, how it is in modern times, even in our own happy country; here, where the sound of the Gospel has penetrated far and near; where circling sabbaths bless our eyes, approved by custom, and sanctioned by publick law; where temples of the living God have been reared by the hands, and hallowed by the hearts of Christians. You know, how it is with vast numbers of our countrymen. They will not care to avow it. They will even profess to scorn the imputation. But in point of fact, the gospel has indeed become to them, as a tale of other times. It has lost the charm of novelty. It has incurred with them the demerit of being old, worn out, and threadbare. They come not to listen to its sacred truths. If an accurate census could be taken, I am perfectly convinced in my own mind, that the numbers to be found in all the Churches of the land, upon each sabbath of the year, would not amount to the half of our population. The excuses for non-attendance are as numerous as the stars in the firmament, and in too many instances as idle and fallacious, as they are numerous. Nothing scarcely will justify a man to his conscience for neglecting his ordinary business. But to the neglect of that business, which should ever be first and foremost in his thoughts; which is to determine the condition of his soul forever and ever; you will find the same conscience completely at ease in Zion, completely dead and disaffected, full of self-complacency, and unsusceptible of the slightest pang of compunction.

But when Paul went to Berea and preached, I remark no such excuses, no such preference of temporal to eternal interests. Although he arrived in the night, the Jewish synagogue was immediately crowded with hearers of every description, men and women,

bond and free, Jews and Gentiles. All came to do him reverence, to hang upon the words of his mouth, and imbibe the dew of his doctrine. O ye Christians of my country! spread over a land enriched by the smiles, and crowned with the blessings of Providence, how much were ye excelled in grace and devotion by those simple, unenlightened hearers, and how little in comparison do ye deserve to be weekly summoned to the house of your God, and faithfully instructed in the right way, that leadeth to everlasting life. At the call of business or of pleasure, ye can forget the mighty God, who saves. Ye can take your ease; ye can indulge in profane amusements; ye can commence your journeys on the day of sacred rest, at the very moment, when ye should repair to your posts in Zion, when ye should worship the Lord God of your fathers, and "listen to your duty with honest hearts in order to practise it." Where is thy blush, O Shame? Where is thy conscience, O Sinner? They neither mantle thy cheek, nor rend thy soul. The Lord hath spoken, rising up early and speaking; but ye hear not. He hath called; but ye answer not. "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"

In the second place, Brethren, those Bereans are commended by the historian, because when listening to the strange things which came to their ears, "they received the word with all readiness of mind." Many of them were Jews, who, before they could believe, must first renounce all the established rites and ceremonies, all the cherished hopes and predilections of their ancestors. Many of them were heathen, who had been accustomed, from their earliest infancy, to believe in God's many and Lord's many, and to esteem it the height of impiety to limit the Godhead to the power and dignity, the majesty and glory, of the only wise and true God, proclaimed in the scriptures. And yet, when Paul preached, they waived all the prejudices connected with their birth and education; they composed their persons in the attitude of strict attention; they gave earnest heed to the inspiration of his lips; they determined to hear with seriousness, and judge with candour. There were no triflers there; no mere verbal critics; no slaves to inveterate habits or preposterous principles. But when you come to analyze the component parts of a modern congregation, of those who, from some motive or other, deign to appear in the courts of the house of their

God; how many are there, who give ample evidence of the utmost indifference to the things which belong to their everlasting peace; how many come to see and to be seen, to sport a feather and exchange a smile; how many to lament the prolixity of the service, the wire-drawn pleadings of the pulpit, the intolerable tedium accompanying a confinement of two long and lingering hours to performances, more nearly allied than any others in this life, to the devotional exercises and enjoyments of the life to come.

These are sad and melancholy truths. They stand out in far too bold relief, in the existing era of the Christian Church, and should cover many heads with shame and confusion of face. We can give ear to forensick eloquence. We can become deeply enamoured with popular harangues. Our attention can be chained down by the mere actor reciting the language of fiction. But to subjects involving the highest interests of a rational and immortal being, we are extremely prone to address ourselves, with the impatience of a prisoner, or the insensibility of a stoick. To the worldly-minded, eternity contrasted with time fades away into a thing of naught; its hell has no terrors; its heaven has no charms. We hear of them as we list to the story of Arctick skies and Asiatick suns, too distant to chill with their snows, or enliven with their warmth. Would to God, that we might become as noble, as devout, as serious and teachable, as the hearers of Berea. They received the word of God with ALL readiness of mind. They perceived its truth, and they felt its commanding energy. Paul had no occasion to rebuke the restless, to rouse the slumberer, to remonstrate with the dull of hearing, to deplore the vacancy of their thoughts, or the hardness of their hearts. But they listened with wonder and delight. They opened their minds to his instruction, as the dry earth her thirsty bosom to the genial dew and refreshing shower. In that large assembly, all eyes were drawn, all ears were attracted to the preacher. He gave them bread from heaven, and this best of food was sweet to their taste. The doctrine was new; the ideas it inspired were new; all their prior systems, whether divine or profane, were materially affected by it; and still, they could successfully contend with the native bias of their country, and the deplorable ignorance of their minds. Before we can reject the counsels of God, we must contrive to unlearn all that we have previously learnt, in infancy and youth, from pious friends and beloved relatives; all that the

wise have honoured, and the good regarded, as venerable, and sacred, and divine. We must become lured by a world, whose principles are at war with the moral sense; inveigled by a system of philosophy, whose adherents have ever failed to triumph, when time was about to close, and eternity eyed them in the face. How much more noble then were the converts of the text! How much more entitled to influence our conduct, by the excellency of their spirit, and the meritorious character of their example!

Especially, when we reflect, in the third place, that there was nothing rash or precipitate in the manner, in which they investigated the doctrines of the cross, and arrived at the conviction of their truth. It was not owing to the person of the Apostle: For it was mean and contemptible. It was not by the graceful flow and cadence of his periods, by the brilliancy or the ingenuity of his arguments: For this is his own remark, "My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." He fairly, not sophistically, "reasoned with them out of the scriptures; opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom he preached unto them, was Christ;" was verily and indeed the Messiah foretold by the prophets, and the Saviour of the world. And did they immediately yield their belief? Did they, from the mere impulse of the moment, blindly accede to his premises, and as blindly adopt his conclusions? No, no such thing: After they heard, they reflected. Deliberation preceded rather than succeeded the assent of their minds. It is recorded to their praise, that they "searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

The faith of some men is of that large, expansive kind, some would call it narrow and contracted, that, to the idol of their idolatry, they are ever ready to sacrifice their own judgment, and mould their own opinions in strict conformity with his. But the Bereans pursued a different course. The Jews among them, in particular, searched for themselves those scriptures of the old testament to which Paul appealed, and only confided in his doctrines, when they discerned their perfect coincidence with the sure word of prophecy, so long familiar to their nation, as the divine rule of their faith and practice. And this is the manner in which we should always arrive at the knowledge of the truth. I have no confidence in a

religion received upon naked assertion, and having for its sole authority the dictum of any man or set of men. We must examine for ourselves. We must "prove all things," and "hold fast that which is good;" that which will stand the test of free and enlightened inquiry. If we cannot give a reason for the faith, that is in us, it is of no more personal benefit, than the creed of a Mussulman, or the idolatry of a Brahmin.

Preachers there are, who seem to think, that they have a kind of prescriptive right to control the consciences of their hearers, and who are not slow in manifesting their indignation, whenever their sentiments are opposed, or their infallibility questioned. But it becomes us better to tell you, Brethren, that "we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord;" that such and such are the weighty truths of scripture, demanding from you patient and laborious investigation. An investigation, that you should most cheerfully accord. Every sabbath you should imitate the conduct of the Bereans. You should not merely treasure up in the memory all that you hear; but when you retire to your several homes, there is a standard to which you should refer. To the bible as to an infallible test, you should submit every principle, every argument, that may wear the appearance of novelty, of error, or even of truth. Implicit faith may be the attribute of fools or of knaves; but honest and judicious inquirers must think and deliberate for themselves. It can do them no harm. All indeed that I am anxious for, in my humble efforts to disseminate the knowledge of heavenly things, is to produce that spirit, which so many want, the spirit of eager examination and accurate research. If the bible will not endure this ordeal, in the name of reason and common sense give it up, or at least reduce it to a level with the best treatises upon ethicks and casuistry. But not before, not before you have gone over a thorough and minute survey of the grounds, external and internal, on which it claims to be divine, the gift of God, and the only medium of that faith and practice, which terminate in life eternal. In all such cases, I have no apprehension for the result. Truth is too powerful and irresistible, not to produce conviction, wherever there are sincerity of purpose and humility of temper to guide the inquirer. I ask no more of the proudest infidel than this, that he should for once lay aside his pride and his prejudice, and honestly though rigidly scrutinize the religion he is now so fond of condemning, with a

little real knowledge of its pretensions and principles, as the child unborn. The daily searching of the scriptures, on the part of the Bereans, eminently contributed to remove the veil from their eyes, to bring them out of darkness into marvellous light, and to make them "wise unto salvation."

I consider it, in the fourth place, to have been highly expedient and praiseworthy, because of the infinite value and importance of the doctrines, which those scriptures disclose. To all other subjects, there is a limit imposed by Providence, and ratified by the undeviating operations of nature. The grass is hardly green, before it is dried up and withered; the fine gold grows dim with age; and the mortality of man is inscribed upon every clod of the valley, and every wave of the sea. But where will you find a limit to the progress of revealed truth? It disdains the rivalry of this frail world of ours. It turns its ardent gaze, it wings its upward flight to heaven, and even there exists immortal as its Author, and enduring as eternity itself. If it only described the best mode of passing the days of your pilgrimage in this brief and transient scene, the folly and presumption of rejecting it might be forgiven. Ye might with some show of plausibility prefer another faith, and with impunity pluck whatsoever forbidden fruit your eyes desired, or the infirmity of your appetites craved. But as it is, with its authenticity brought home to our conviction by the inward testimony of the conscience, presaging future indignation and wrath to the guilty; future glory and honour, and immortality to the righteous; how greatly is the lustre of every earthly attraction diminished by the comparison; how utterly senseless and inexcusable are all those pursuits, which have not religion for their basis, and the house not made with hands, which is eternal in the heavens, for their final home. By the mouth of Christ, the wealth of the world has been pronounced, but a poor and wretched substitute. Our own hearts have experienced, when rifled of their long loved inmates by the destroyer's hand, that no kindred ties, no warmth of kindred affection can pretend to compensate for the absence of vital faith and holiness in the soul.

I will even approach that engrossing theme, which now agitates every bosom, which constitutes the fruitful source of innumerable hopes and fears, and seriously demand, What advantage will it prove to you, whether your own, or the favourite of another, obtains a

a nation's proudest honours, in comparison of that comprehensive knowledge of the scriptures, which results in heartfelt love to God and man? I am not so utterly senseless and absurd as to deny, that we ought to take a warm interest in the welfare and prosperity of the land we inhabit, in the continued purity of its institutions, and the fidelity of its publick servants. But that kind of party spirit, which now rages from one extremity of the union to the other, must be deeply deplored by every sincere and patriotick friend of his country. It sets at defiance the laws of honour and decorum, of reason and truth, of virtue and religion. It plants a dagger in hands once accustomed to grasp each other with manly confidence, and threatens to dissolve the very cement of society. I have indeed heard, and have no doubt that many persons really delude themselves with the idea, that the continuance of our national liberties materially depends upon the issue of the existing contest.

But believe me, Brethren, they, who some hundred years hence are destined to tread upon our ashes, will be just as happy, and free, and prosperous, as we are. The smiles of heaven are so obviously beaming upon our favoured land, that, by no probable folly or misconduct of the rulers or the ruled, can its growth and prosperity be essentially endangered. Its march is onward and forward, and he, who would seek to retard the revolving wheels of its glory, might as well attempt to blow out the sun, or unsettle the foundations of the great deep. Admitting however that I should prove mistaken in this conjecture, what will it be to us, or to our children, one hundred years hence, whether the present struggle terminates in our personal triumph or defeat? What will it not be, if instead of devoting all our time, and thoughts, and talents, to elevate to office the man of our choice, we employ the larger proportion in unwearied efforts to elevate our own precious and immortal souls to those blissful regions, where such crowns of glory will encircle every brow, that in the contrast the honours and diadems of this world are no better than the toys and triumphs of an hour?

I should not have touched upon this subject, knowing the extraordinary excitement which prevails, did I not conscientiously believe, that party spirit, when carried to its present enormous excess, is not merely a national evil, but a glaring vice; that it is offensive in the sight of God, and therefore as evidently requiring to be discountenanced from the pulpit, as intemperance, or gluttony.

or fraud, or any other moral nuisance, including religious controversies, which, as generally conducted, bear perhaps the strongest affinity to political strife and rancour. The remedy is to be found in more anxious endeavours to profit by the inspired declaration, "the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." We are indeed told upon high authority, that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God;" and seriously would I recommend moderation to all men, a more calm and dispassionate mode of determining what, it must be conceded, are for the most part honest differences of opinion. As they encroach far too much upon the few and fleeting moments allotted us to prepare for eternity, it would not be likely to disturb our dying pillow with a thorn, if, after the example of the Bereans, we gave the more diligent attention to the daily searching and study of the holy scriptures.

These, I repeat, are able to make us wise unto salvation. They alone through Christ confer this inestimable benefit on our perishing race, and to discard them for any other object, as it is necessarily temporal and of minor importance, argues something more than an error in judgment. It betrays a criminal indifference to our future happiness. It is a species of spiritual suicide, over which, they will have ample cause to weep and lament, who commit it, heedless of the threats and the promises conveyed in the gospel of Christ. That precious gospel, which to the moral world is as the sun to the natural, imparting light and heat, the illumination of the Spirit, and the undying flame of pure and undefiled religion. To die happy, we must live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. To live thus, we must make the bible the repository of our faith, and the manual of our practice. To become versed in literature or the arts, in law or in medicine, we must perseveringly read and faithfully treasure up the fruits of our reading. And what is there true is even more so in the nobler profession. As Christians, we must study to make ourselves approved of God, by copious draughts imbibed at the fountain of his wisdom and grace. He "has caused all holy scriptures to be written for our learning," and we must "in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them," that our profiting may appear; that our faith may be strong, our repentance sincere, our obedience perfect, and our lives holy and irreproveable in his sight.

Less than this will not avail; no more avail than it will to skim the surface without exerting ourselves to penetrate the depths of science.

Oh then that I might prevail upon you to turn your thoughts more seriously and intently upon heavenly things; this day prevail upon you to commence with persevering ardour the perusal of the bible, and particularly of that gospel of Christ, which is solemnly urged upon your attention as "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." There is but a little while before all opportunity to improve by it will be circumscribed by the grave whither ye go. As to you, its lids will then be closed, its inspiration sealed. And can ye bear to think of descending into that grave unaccompanied by its light, and unreformed by its spirit? The physical courage may be yours: For the worm will there feed upon you unnoticed and unfelt. It can inflict no painful wound upon your mortal relics. But there is another grave, the grave of the soul! There is another worm, the worm that dieth not! And can ye without emotion endure the idea of being everlastingly vexed by them? Not if ye have ever dwelt with seriousness upon those pages, which describe the terrible effects of the divine displeasure hereafter to be poured out upon the ungodly and the sinner. Not if ye have ever beheld, how piteously the wicked man upon a dying bed cries out in the anguish of his soul, and struggles hard to escape what he once fondly imagined to be the mere colouring and embellishment of priestcraft. No, no, if ye have been made acquainted with these things, it is not in nature, it is not in philosophy to stand upon the brink, and not shudder at the fatal necessity of leaping the precipice, whose foundations are based in perdition.

Save yourselves therefore, I once more conjure you, Brethren, save yourselves from the present dread, and the future experience of this awful catastrophe. The method is clearly inscribed on the page of inspiration. Receive ye the word of life with all readiness of mind. Search ye the scriptures daily whether those things are so. Ye will not have, as the Bereans had, an inspired penman to record and transmit your praises to succeeding times. But like them, ye will have what is far better, the graces of a new creature in Christ Jesus while ye live, and the testimony of a good conscience, of a lively faith, and of a certain hope, when ye come to die. All which, may God of his infinite mercy grant; may his

ministering angels watch over and protect you throughout your present warfare and your last extremity ; “ in the union of the holy Jesus, and in the love of God, and in the communion of all the saints, may your souls be presented,” at the tribunal of eternal mercy, “ blameless, and entirely pardoned, and thoroughly washed, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” AMEN.

SERMON XXVIII.

REVELATIONS ii. 4.

Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee.

IT is probably known to you, Brethren, that the last human being to whom our blessed Saviour condescended to speak was the beloved disciple John, at that time residing in the island of Patmos, and fast verging to the close of a long and weary life. It was many years after the resurrection; many years after our crucified Lord had ascended into heaven, and was forever sat down at the right hand of God. Among other incidents connected with this memorable event, the Apostle informs us, “ I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.—And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw—one like unto the Son of man.—His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;—and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.—Unto the angel of the Church of Ephesus, write;—I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou

hast tried them which say they are Apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience; and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."

Yes, Brethren, such were the words, which our Saviour Christ dictated to the holy Apostle, and directed to be communicated by him to the angel or bishop of one of the seven Churches of Asia Minor. They blend together the accents of praise and of censure. Commendation is bestowed where it was due, and reproach, where the abandonment of his first love prevailed to cool the ardour of primitive piety; to neutralize the faith, and adulterate the works of the highest ecclesiastick, and probably of all the Christians of Ephesus. And that same oversight, which our gracious Redeemer then exerted in relation to his visible Church, he still exercises over every part of the spiritual vineyard, which his own right hand hath planted within the precincts of time. No voice indeed is heard, no sound of approbation, no murmur of disappointed love. The web of prophecy has been woven. The lips, which spake as never man spake, have ceased to move. The stream, which now escapes from the fountain of divine instruction, flows in a channel worn smooth by the attrition of ages, and is therefore unaccompanied by a "voice as the sound of many waters."

But what is inaudible to the ear may be whispered to the conscience. What is not seen by the eye, the imagination may learn to realize. There is not one emotion of our hearts, not one sentiment of our souls; but is clearly perceived and understood by that Jesus, with whom we have to do. He searches by his Spirit the deep things of man. He needeth not that any man should tell him. Highly exalted above all principalities and powers, he reads the thoughts, he scrutinizes the actions of his people. Are we cold, and dead, and palsied in our affection towards him? Conscience is the monitor, with which he vexes the soul. Have we never enlisted in his service, or having enlisted, have we forsaken our first love? Conscience is the medium, through which he troubles the sinner, and revives in his hearing the memorable words, "I have somewhat against thee." You cannot refuse to listen to its rebukes. You cannot wholly silence its clamour. By its still small voice, the man Christ Jesus though dead yet speaketh, speaketh from

heaven, where he is alive again. Let us attend to it then, as to a voice of instruction, of reproof, of edification. With breathless anxiety, let us catch its purport, and, suspending all other intents of the mind, imagine the tenour of those admonitions, he would impart, were he visibly present to reckon up in order the long catalogue of our errors, as men, as labourers in his vineyard, as probationers for eternity.

I apprehend, Brethren, that I shall not be accused of deviating widely from the genuine spirit and principles of Christian charity, when I conjecture, that he would have somewhat to say against our faith. Nothing is more easy to pronounce, than the first words of the creed, I believe. Light has been so fully dispersed among the nations, that were a person to survey his features in a mirror; he would discover a blush of conscious shame almost invariably accompanying the declaration, I deny Jesus and the power of his resurrection; I am a follower of Hobbes, of Bolingbroke, of Paine; their talents were of a higher order, their wisdom more sage and profound, than the talents and the wisdom of the poor Galilean, cramped as he was by the intellectual ignorance of his age, and the yet crude, undigested theorems of heaven-born philosophy. The soul must be deeply tinged with depravity not to be seriously shocked at the bare thought of giving utterance to such sentiments as these. They are cherished by few. They are avowed by fewer still; rarely or never with the last breath they are permitted to draw. Is their absence then to be hailed as a sure and certain sign of the presence of that faith required in the Gospel of Christ? Is the mere lip confession, that he is the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, all sufficient to ensure his smiles and anticipate his promised rewards? Christianity would soon become the religion of the whole earth. Lord I believe would be the universal cry and he would have nothing to say against us.

But alas, Brethren, the lips may move, and the soul be dumb. It is against persons of this description, that our Saviour would prefer the charge of unbelief. Do you deserve it? Ask your own consciences, if you could take unagitated and unalarmed, the solemn oath, I believe from the heart all that the evangelists have written, of what was said and done by Jesus of Nazareth? Before that oath could be registered in heaven as true; his sayings must be known and treasured up in the memory: his doings must have passed the

ordeal of the spiritual eye. Has this been effected? Can ye tell all that he has performed for your souls, and for the souls of your fellow men; all the doctrines he has divulged; all the commandments he has enjoined? Entire ignorance proves an insuperable obstruction to the faith of an infant, an ideot, or a savage. And let me entreat you to remember, that a partial and voluntary ignorance of the system of revealed truth is as formidable an obstacle to the faith of the nominal Christian. If ye have not searched the scriptures for yourselves, ye cannot understand all the words of this life. If there is a cardinal doctrine, or one cardinal virtue, that has escaped your observation, ye are none of Christ's, he is not formed in your hearts the hope of glory. To be a Calvinist, to be an Arminian, it is not enough to know that Calvin and Arminius have both lived and died. You must rather broach their works, and become familiar with their respective creeds. You must also receive them entirely. You cannot embrace one peculiarity in doctrine, and renounce another. Their undeviating followers might on such ground acknowledge the verisimilitude, but not the identity of your faith. It is thus with Christ. He disowns a partial, divided assent of the mind, believing this and disbelieving that. If he is true in some points, he is true in all. If the divinity stirred within him, as he pronounced, "I am he that liveth; and behold, I am alive forevermore;" it was that same divinity, which exclaimed "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last;" thereby, when taken in connexion with a preceding verse, clearly making himself equal with God; and entitled to be equally worshipped, equally adored and magnified.

To avoid the imputation of the text, it is also requisite to believe on the same evidence, that controlled the faith of the immediate disciples of our Lord. I do not mean to assert, that the natural eye must gaze upon such miracles, as were openly and publicly wrought in the days of his flesh. But whatever was the nature of those miracles, you are to consider them as not less fully establishing the veracity of his doctrines, than if they were performed in your own presence. You must in imagination accompany him to the pool of Bethesda, and behold the impotent man, at his command, rise, take up his bed, and walk, completely relieved of an infirmity of eight and thirty years duration. You must behold him restore eyes to the blind, ears to the deaf, speech to the dumb, life to the dead. You

must behold him rising from his own lowly sepulture, and "marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

I need not tell you what would be the influence of these things, provided they were to be re-enacted, and you were permitted to see the individual, clothed with such power, face to face. You must admit, that you would then believe every doctrine and precept he advanced, with all your heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. And if you do not in this manner believe them now, as freely, as unreservedly, Christ hath still somewhat to say against you. There must be no doubt, no hesitancy. In the beginning you may weigh the force of the evidence; you may subject it to the strictest rules of legal analysis. But when the investigation is closed, if every shadow of uncertainty is not thoroughly removed, Christ will no more recognise you as Christians, than would the shade of Franklin, as philosophers, if ye were to deny that there is substance in air, or electricity in the clouds. General impressions, general acknowledgements, do not constitute faith. It must descend to particulars, and be built on them. Nor must it rise or fall, in accordance with the credit or discredit attached to the learning and judgment of divines. It must be personal. It must be conceived and matured within your own minds. Ye must be able to say with the holy Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another."

Again, Brethren, Christ will have somewhat to say against you, if your faith is merely speculative; if, while it embellishes the head, it is repudiated by the heart; if ye do those things, which ye ought not to do. Is the child animated by the true spirit of filial affection, who flies in the face of parental authority? Does he deserve to be regarded as recognising a father's or a mother's gentle sway, if, at the very moment he uses these endearing titles, he cuts them to the soul by his vices, and relinquishes not one darling sin, either at the word of command, or at the voice of entreaty? I have not thus understood the nature or the obligations of filial piety. I have not so understood the scriptures, as to believe, that such faith in Jesus will

subserve the purposes of our probationary state. By him, "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." And do I see the world engross the thoughts of those, who are fain to talk of him, as their Lord and Master? Do they revel in every haunt of sensuality, and sip the dew from every flower, that skirts the path of licentious indulgence? Less even than this, as the truly faithful concur in believing, Do they limit their duties to the education and maintenance of their families, to industrious habits, to laudable economy, to inflexible integrity in the transactions of business? In all these particulars, in vain do I look for that species of faith, which worketh by love, which purifies the heart, and overcomes the world. Surrounded as we are on every side by forbidden fruit, the language of scripture is, "touch not, taste not, handle not." Tempted as we are by every prospect of temporal aggrandizement, the same scripture admonishes us, "Take no thought," in other words, think not exclusively, "for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"

How obvious then, that our Saviour will have much to say against the sensualist on the one hand, and the worldling on the other. The cropping of flowers, or the husbanding of more substantial goods, may alike comport with a barren, intellectual faith. I know not, that immorality has more victims than simple, undigested morality. It has less credit with men, and for the peace and welfare of society deservedly so. But with Christ it will not alone endure the stripes of an endless punishment. With him, there is no substitute for operative faith, for that which is exemplified in every good word and work. To be free from the censure he inflicted upon the Church at Ephesus, ye must not, Brethren, leave undone those things, which ye ought to do. You must come to him full handed, fully loaded with treasures laid up in heaven. To the charities of life, to deeds of benevolence, to freedom from the grosser impurities, you must unite the devotion of the heart towards God; not only negative, but positive obedience towards Christ.

Is that man entitled to be called a Christian, whose God is unsought in prayer, and unworshipped in praise; whose sins are unconfessed, and whose repentance is confined to the sorrow of the world, which worketh death? Will he have any claim upon his

mercy, who prepared not himself according to his will and word; who, notwithstanding the inspired behest, "This do, and thou shalt live," hath failed to run in the way of God's commandments; hath not opened his bible to draw from it treasures new and old, hath not remembered the sabbath day to keep it holy; hath not returned love for love, nor devoted the gifted faculties of his soul to the reasonable service of his Maker and Preserver? Is that man entitled to be called a Christian, whose faith in Jesus never soared upon the wings of love, nor settled down in gratitude and admiration upon the cross of Calvary; whose spirit never bore that cross, and in the consciousness of sin never felt the sharpness of those nails, which transfixed the hands and feet, and the venom of that spear, which pierced the side of the greatest of all philanthropists; whose brows were never bathed with that water, which he blessed to the emblematick washing away of sin; whose soul never partook in faith of that crucified body, which was once made the sport and ridicule of ungodly men, that the ransom of his life might be liquidated, and the native heaven of his spirit become his inheritance forever?

All these things are demanded of the Christian, and being left unperformed, can he have the confidence to believe, that our blessed Redeemer will have nothing to allege against him; no scruples about embracing him for his own, and giving unto him the blessing of life eternal? God forbid, Brethren, that either of us should stand in this awful predicament at the day of judgment. It is enough for sinners to be informed, in the time of this mortal pilgrimage, what woes will then cluster thick around the heads of the impenitent and unprepared. And if, notwithstanding the friendly warnings and admonitions of the preacher, the tremendous scene should burst upon their view, unexpected as undesired, oh how will they endure, "standing without, and knocking at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us;" how will they endure to hear his once gentle and persuasive, but now terrible and uncompromising voice, in reply, "I tell you, I know you not whence ye are: depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity?" Under such circumstances, mere mortal man could not live, and would be glad to die; glad to take refuge in the far less dreadful catastrophe of annihilation. But for the naked soul it may not be. There is immortality for the lost, as well as for the saved. "There shall be weeping and gnashing of

teeth, when they shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and they themselves thrust out."

Take ye therefore good heed, Brethren, that Christ may hereafter have nothing to object to your faith, and nothing to your love. Sure I am, that no passion of the human heart should be more exclusively his own. If faith presents him nailed to the cross, wounded, bleeding, dying, love should mingle with that faith; it should glow with pure, unadulterated warmth of affection, often as we reflect, for whose sins, for whose future welfare, he thus poured out his precious soul unto death; it should erect for him a throne within, upon which he should be established King of Kings, and Lord of Lords; his sceptre should not pass away, and of his dominion there should be no end. Does he then from heaven survey our love, that it is cold, languid, and expiring, ay, already dead? Much will he have to say against us. These may be his words. For you, though rich in heaven, I became poor. For you, though the diadem of the universe graced my brow, I was content to wear a crown of thorns. For you, though legions of angels veiled their faces before me, chanting psalms to my praise, and hallelujahs to my glory, I was moved by infinite compassion, not only to be clothed with your infirmities, but to be exposed to the revilings, the scorn and outrage of your race; to be scourged, and buffeted, and spit upon; to be taken by wicked hands, and crucified, and slain. And what, could ye not for these unrivalled sacrifices, these unutterable and unknown sufferings; could ye not, throughout the term of a short and transient life, waive one ray of amusement, one project of ambition, in order to wake the song of gratitude, and hymn the praises of redeeming love? O humanity! thou art made of stern, incorrigible stuff; thine eye is marble, and thine heart is iron; else tears would not cease to flow, nor inward wounds to bleed; else the universal voice of love would not fail to pierce the skies, and fulfil the joy that was set before me, while yet, for nine long and lingering hours, I "endured the cross, despising the shame." But I shall come again rejoicing, and somewhat I shall have to say against thee, which you will betray no anxiety to hear. I shall come; but it will not be to weep, as I once wept over Jerusalem. It will not be to witness the shaking of Jewish heads, and the wagging of Jewish tongues. It will not be to perspire great drops of blood

within the garden grounds of Gethsemane, nor to re-enact at the place of Golgotha the before unheard of cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But I shall come; wo unto them that were once at ease in Zion, I shall come, precisely as Paul hath told you, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." "He shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe," "in that day."

Sinners! impenitent, faithless, and ungrateful sinners! it is to you, that these things should be the most alarming, and to you are they chiefly addressed. How many are there in this audience, who have never laid them to heart; who have never truly believed in Christ; (forbid, "heavenly Father," that they should hereafter be made to believe and tremble,) who have never, I repeat, truly believed in Christ: "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness;" and what righteousness have ye practised? "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation," and what confession have ye poured into the divine ear? I will answer in the words of Jehovah, "Hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters! they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." Some of you think more of the allurements of time, than ye do, of those of eternity. Some of you are more concerned for the meat that perisheth, than for that which endureth unto everlasting life. Some of you, and I know not that I should exclude any, have generous sentiments, friendly feelings, charitable dispositions, honourable principles, manly and feminine virtues. But friends of my heart, attendants upon my ministry, esteemed for your candour, and beloved for your kindness, I must cry aloud, and not spare you upon the subject of religion. Why do ye rob God of the glory

of being uppermost in your minds? Why do ye rob the Christ of God, of the supreme love and affection, the gratitude and thankfulness, the faith and obedience, so pre-eminently his due? Is it for the promises of a world about to turn its back upon you forever? Is it for a dream that vanisheth, and a shadow that declineth? Is it for gold that becometh dim, and the fine gold that shall be turned into dross? Where will ye lay your hands upon them, when a few more years shall come? Where will be "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life?" All confined within the narrow compass of one little spot of earth. Ye will soon go down into the dust together; and future generations will know no more, and care no more, about the reliicks sleeping beneath the tread of their feet, than ye do about the men and the women, who miserably perished, when the waters prevailed exceedingly, overtopping the topmost hills of the earth.

How much better then to obtain an interest in Him, who careth for you; who through the slumber of ages will have an eye to your mortal remains; who will never rest satisfied, until in God's own good time, he shall raise them up in great power and glory. The body, that ye now have, is confessedly vile. Do ye prefer it to one made like unto Christ's own glorious body? The soul, that ye now have, is conceived in sin, and born in iniquity. Do ye value it more, than if it were transformed into the Image of Him, that created you? The world and the fashion thereof is passing away. Do ye dote upon it more, than ye prize an eternal refuge in the far distant country of Immanuel? The wages of sin is death. Do ye mean to say, that it is better to die everlastingly, than with all the wise and good to share the gift of God, which is life eternal? I put these questions to your consciences, and if ye will but let them do their own clever work, if ye will but let the spirit of our God reprove you "of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment;" ye will no more dare to do, as ye are accustomed to do; ye will no more dare to commit suicide upon your souls, than suicide upon your bodies; ye will determine for all future time, so to live, that when ye come to die and be judged, Christ shall be deprived, as he desires to be deprived, of all occasion to say somewhat against you.

This language of his, when viewed in connexion with the context, is however peculiarly applicable to the languid Christian. To him,

whose faith has deteriorated; whose zeal has flagged; whose first love has been left. There is much of this lukewarmness, to call it by no harsher name, in every part of the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts. It may be seen in old excuses, new vamped and garnished into seemly apologies, for the neglect of heavenly things. It may be seen in the avoidance of duties, become too burdensome by repetition; too stale to retain the charm of novelty; too heavy a tax on time to be advantageously exhibited in the light of even eternity itself. As Eve was tired of her paradise, so the decaying Christian begins to tire of that Church of the living God, where in the estimation of David the spending of a day was better than a thousand elsewhere. From banqueting on the rich provision of his Father's board, he is tempted like her to stray, in quest of food, more pleasant to the eyes, and fitted to make him wiser, than that which is written, "This do in remembrance of me." But oh the wretchedness of this policy, the foulness of this ingratitude, with those that have once "tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come." To feed on husks in preference to the heavenly manna! It is next to impossible "to renew them again unto repentance. Christ the bread of life, forsaken and rejected for the garbage of time, will have much to say against them. In his own expressive language, immediately succeeding the text, they should be thus feelingly and seriously rebuked, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." It was indeed portentous of death to its object, and as an example to others in like cases offending, it is scarcely less portentous of the spiritual decline, perhaps the utter extinction of the individual Church, that has received them into her sheltering bosom.

Repent is therefore the becoming watchword of the preacher. Repent is that imperative mandate of Christ, which if men shall fail to obey, he will have somewhat more unpalatable to perform; he will remove their candlestick out of its place, and blot out their names from the Lamb's book of life. Perseverance in faith and in holiness is the only true wisdom; that wisdom which is justified of her children. "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding: For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold

She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths, are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her." May God therefore, of his infinite mercy, grant us this wisdom, which is from above; may we so employ it, by keeping our first love and doing our first works, that our Saviour Christ may have nothing to say against us, when the hearts of the wicked shall fail them through fear; and to Him, with the Father and Eternal Spirit, three persons and one God, shall be ascribed unbounded glory, and honour, and praise, world without end. AMEN.

SERMON XXIX.

AMOS vi. 1.

Wo to them that are at ease in Zion.

IN common with all the creatures of God, the love of ease is characteristic of the human race. Not one of us can pretend to be fascinated by the charms of toil and fatigue. Not one of us to be captivated with the pressure of adversity, or the throes of pain. It is not natural. In the blissful bowers of Eden, the winds of heaven might ruffle its green foliage; but neither care nor perplexity ruffled the smooth heaven of the human heart. The one might convulse the neighbouring ocean, and cause it to lift up its waves on high; but the other never wet the cheek with one briny tear, nor chafed the bosom with one surge of sorrow. Eden was but another name for pleasure, a garden of delights, an Elysium of joy. Ease was the cause, a mind at ease, a soul at ease, the heart and hands at ease.

Nothing indeed could be more natural, when the livelong day was spent beneath the umbrage of the tree of life; when its fruit was immortality, and its culture the handiwork of God alone. And what was then natural has not lost its savour, owing to the sentence,

"Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life." We are still the lovers of ease. When it shuns our eager grasp, we sigh for a renewed possession. When it discloses its smiling features, and scatters roses in our path, we seem to tread on velvet, to repose on down. Wonderful then, that the prophet should exclaim, "Wo to them that are at ease in Zion." Wonderful, methinks I hear you say, that what is so natural, so gratifying to our senses, so congenial to our habits, should contract the frowns of God, and draw from him the language of reproof, enforced by the threat of punishment. Does it actually disturb our heavenly Father to behold us free from pain, and unvexed by the storms of affliction? Do our smiles annoy, and our tears delight him? Answer all ye gifts of heaven, from the lighted sky to the yielding earth, and ye can but attest our Maker's praise, our Father's love; that he holds us dear as the apple of his eye; that he hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servants. Why then this malediction, this wo, pronounced upon the easy-hearted in the ways of Zion.

Let us endeavour, Brethren, to analyze the subject, and assign some reasons, which may serve to vindicate the divine goodness and benevolence. In the first place, it should be borne in mind, that it is not Christian ease, which is here prospectively denounced. Of all that inhabit the round world, the Christian is, as he deserves to be, the happiest of his kind. It matters not what climate he lives in; what summers warm or what winters chill. He may be either young or old, rich or poor, bond or free; and still, if he is a good and faithful soldier and servant of Christ; if he has taken up his cross and followed him; if he has denied all ungodliness and worldly lusts; if he has washed his hands in innocency; there is ease for him. "The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." Enemies may encompass the Christian on every side. The sharper may defeat his worldly fortunes. The slanderer repeat the oft refuted lie. The busybody strive to dash with many a cloud the scene of every temporal enjoyment. And yet, they probe not the conscience of a good and faithful servant. They shoot not arrows that pierce like the arrows of sin; and being free from these, being "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might," the moral sun illumines not a happier spirit.

Recollect that I refer to the genuine Christian alone. I pronounce no eulogium on the selfish, the interested, the exclusive and the excluding: They, that bear the standard of mere propagandists, and, with a zeal closely allied to the warm canvass of a politician, compass sea and land to make one proselyte, not to the self-denying doctrines and precepts of the cross; but to the cause of schism, to the shibboleth of a sect, to the idol of a parish, to the poor wretch, who fondly thinks each loud hosanna chanted in his praise, a sure and certain index of a renewed mind. But I refer to the Christian, whose banner, like the banner of Christ, is love; whose bosom disdains a throb inconsistent with the welfare of his species; whose "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;" whose holiness has its foundation in the fleshly tables of the heart, and is practised from within to ingratiate himself with God, and not with man. No wo threatens him. No future curse impends over his head. His conscience befriends him. His soul dwells at ease, legitimate and unforbidden. "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." If I were to compare him with any thing in the heaven above or in the earth beneath, it would be with the soft blue sky reflected in the crystal fount. Even so is the divine Image reflected in his soul, and peace, and harmony, and joy conspire to fill up the cycle of his years.

Let me however remind you, Brethren, that there is often to be seen in the natural world a deceitful calm, followed by an unexpected storm. The visible heavens are clement and serene; but below the horizon, the angry elements are brewing all their terrors, and wo to the mariner unprepared to encounter the sudden gale; wo to them that tempt the dangers of the sea, and have not the counsels of nautical experience to discern the signs of the times. Before the vessel is secured, the waves devour her. They, that thought of home, shall never think of home again; of beholding friends and relatives, shall behold no more. And what is true, in the chapter of natural accidents, is equally true, in the spiritual concerns of the soul. There is a delusive calm, which it does not, will not, penetrate. There is a storm approaching, against which, it has made no provision. "In the midst of life we are in death." And yet, we seem to act, as if with that death we had made a covenant.

and as if we were at an agreement with hell. Oh that the words of the prophet might stir up an earnest heed to the things, which belong to our everlasting peace, before they are forever hid from our eyes. "Wo to them that are at ease in Zion." Wo to them, that hear the sayings of Jesus, and do them not. They "shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."

I shall proceed, in the second place, to designate them, and holding up a spiritual mirror to the eyes of the mind, I trust, Brethren, that if ye perceive any traits of resemblance, ye will not be "like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was."—They are at ease in Zion, whose God is the world; whose glory is their shame. Look at some of the verses in the chapter, from which the text is selected, and you will find it recorded that they "lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches;" that they "chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick like David;" that they "drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments." How minute the picture! How accurate, and well defined the colouring! How smoothly polished is the glass, in which the visage of the modern sinner shines, when pleasure usurps entire dominion over the heart and its affections, leading them captive at its will. Give me "a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." Give me the choicest viands and the richest delicacies. Give me "wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine." Give me musick, and merriment, and revelry and song."

"These delights, if thou canst give,

"Mirth, with thee I mean to live."

All this is still the fond, unceasing cry of those, who are "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." I do not speak of innocent gratifications, of those harmless indulgences of which our blessed Saviour gave us an example at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee. As I have often told you, there is nothing criminal in buoyant spirits, in lively manners, in a pleasant interchange of social feelings, in a moderate participation of the good things of this life. But be it known to you, that a continued course of mere amusement is

emphatically a course of sin. It has no preceptive warrant in holy scripture. It is not justified by one single example out of the long list of worthies, who are there represented to have made their peace with God. Whatever might have been their prior history, no sooner did they "put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;" no sooner were they "renewed in the spirit of their mind," than they "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Where then are we to search for the votaries of the world? The rich man of the parable was one, and ye know his fate. The woman described by St. Paul was another, and this is her portrait, "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." They were indeed at ease in Zion. They looked not beyond the present, or if they looked, it was under the conviction, that "to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." But at length a morrow came, that tore away the bandage from their eyes, and poured a flood of light upon their vision, more painful to gaze upon than the meridian sun. It was the morrow of eternity. The morrow wherein "their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched." Are ye then disposed to share their disastrous doom? Ye have only to continue spreading your canvass to the breeze of pleasure, and sailing down the stream of life, to reach forth the hand, and crop the flowers of various hue, that cluster upon its banks. "For all these things God will bring you into judgment." In due time, the cataract shall appear, and one fatal plunge convert the pleasures of sin, into the pains of hell. But do ye think this too dear a sacrifice for present enjoyment? On counting the cost, would ye prefer so to live, that ye may spend your eternity with Peter, and James, and John; with Mary Magdalen, the other Mary, and Mary the mother of Christ? Rouse up from the dreamy confidence of time and sense. Shake off the idols and the fantasies of this world. Pray ye the Lord to change your hearts, to purify your affections, to sanctify all the powers of your bodies and your souls. It is by pursuing the Apostolick counsel, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof," that ye can alone escape the horrors of the dread unknown. Were it not thus, our Saviour would have told you. Instead of threatenings, he would have been liberal in promises to

the gay and dissolute. His Church would have been a theatre; his sabbath, a gala day; his holy supper, a literal "feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees; of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." But as it is: Wo to them that reiterate the soliloquy of the voluptuary, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;" Wo to them, whose God is the world; whose glory is their shame.

They too, Brethren, are at ease in Zion, who, to use another expression of the prophet, "put far away the evil day." And by the evil day, they mean the day of conversion, of mourning and weeping for sin, of contending manfully in the warfare of the good fight. They design to repent, but not now. They have a confident expectation of hereafter adorning the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things; but to his immediate and urgent importunities, to his repeated applications at the door of their hearts, "his head filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night," they are fain to reply, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." Do ye not all recognise the picture? Is it not a faithful transcript of what has passed through your minds a hundred, nay, a thousand times? When ye have seen death stalking abroad, and numbering among his victims the careless and unprepared; have ye not formed many pious resolutions to walk no more after the course of this world, disquieting yourselves in vain? When he has robbed you of beloved relatives; of infants that knew no sin; of fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, lovely and pleasant in their lives, faithful and rejoicing in their deaths; have ye not listened and assented to that voice of conscience, which, on these occasions, so loudly conveys the solemn admonition, "Prepare to meet thy God?" It were useless to deny it. Were it otherwise, ye would be elevated above the sphere of mortals. Soon however, too soon alas, the tears of affection have been wiped away; the wounds of the bleeding bosom have been stanch'd; and with these tears, those wounds, have departed all your projects of immediate reformation. The clay was hardly cold, the turf was not green upon the new made grave, before ye began to relent a little, to think better of it, and at length to think no more, save as ye thought at first, ever delaying and never coming to a good result.

Yes, Brethren, when ye revolve these things in your memories, it will be found, that it has been with astonishing rapidity, that ye have come to your ease again. It will be found, that another and perhaps another shaft must be sped, before the last loved look, the last dying counsel shall have their full effect in converting you from the peace of this world to the peace of Christ. But oh! the folly, the perversity, the infatuation of all such trifling with the health and salvation of the immortal soul. If ye could safely rely upon the lease of a year, it would be too brief for the requisition, "pay what thou owest," to the God that made you, to the Saviour that redeemed you; and are ye willing to contract that year to a day, when ye know not what a day may bring forth? Are ye willing, that your part in the happiness of eternity shall depend upon the uncertain contingency, that the morrow will arrive? It has already cheated many an expectation, as fair, as plausible, as strong as yours. Take ye therefore good heed, that it does not cheat you. While ye are yet sunning yourselves at your ease, the blast may have transpired, and the bolt be forged, which is to consign you to the shades of death. And then what becomes of the easy-minded sinner, of his smooth complexioned flattery, his broken promises, his fond presentiments, his everlasting procrastination of that, which to be done effectually must be done to-day. "The grave" O Lord, "cannot praise thee; death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth." If we live at ease, while here below, vainly calculating on future days of faith, and repentance, and obedience, we must take the consequences; we must repose on shadows; we must build on uncertainty; we may die before we are aware, and, with its intolerable woes, "hell from beneath will be moved to meet us at our coming."

They also are at ease in Zion, who never trouble themselves about their salvation, because they think that God is too good, too benevolent, too merciful and just, to punish them for the few trivial inadvertences, the few venial sins, which they flatter themselves can alone be laid to their charge. All the fierceness of his anger, they reserve for the worst offenders. They entertain not a doubt of their own acceptance with him, of their being hereafter admitted to the presence of his exceeding glory. But where I ask is the charter upon which their hopes are founded? Is it a suggestion flowing from the fountain of human wisdom? It would operate

against all punishment; that which is temporal, as well as that which is eternal. And yet, little sins are punished here. Parents themselves are instruments, in the hands of God, to correct the faults and foibles of their children; while many petty crimes are amenable to the laws of the land, as well as those of a larger size. Is it then from the records of inspiration, that sinners obtain their strong reasons, and insist upon their future indemnity? Let them produce them, the page, the chapter, the verse. Among Christians, the law and the testimony will ever be accredited. But for one, I have never seen them. Our Saviour found them not in any passage of the old testament, upon which he commented; the Apostles in any of his sayings; the great body of believers in the authorized canon of scripture, which has been transmitted from age to age.

True it is, that the greater crime includes the less, and therefore when it is written, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool;" we require no higher proof to convince us of the pardonable nature of all human guilt, except the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. But as for these nice distinctions, these venial sins compared with such as are mortal, they are far from being countenanced in the bible. Without sincere repentance for every sinful thought, word, and deed; that kind of repentance, which is productive of newness of life, there is not one ray of hope to illumine the path of the transgressor; not one solitary sentence, that can absolve him from the pains and penalties of eternal death. How explicit and peremptory are the words of Christ, "Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Does not this embrace every offence? Does it not require, that our repentance should be thorough and indiscriminate? Or, must we vary the received interpretation of our English tongue? Must we give to jot and tittle the magnitude of mountains, so as to exclude the indiscretions of youth, the peccadillo's of riper years? Truly deplorable would be the consequence; truly deplorable the age, in which such sentiments should generally prevail, and this declaration of our Saviour be esteemed of no account, "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven." No, no, the true penitent must renounce all iniquity. If he allows it in one particular, he will

allow it in another. If you pierce one fibre of the human heart, you snap all the strings of life. The feeling of ease and security obtained from the conviction of being little sinners, of itself marks, not only a dangerous error, but a high degree of guilt. David, upon his bended knees, could devoutly ask of God to cleanse him from secret faults. But here are sinners, who persist in what they acknowledge to be wrong. Here are sinners, who, because they avoid the wide streams and merely sip the murmuring rills of pollution, are vain enough to imagine themselves fitly prepared for the presence of that God of purity, who chargeth his angels with folly, and in whose sight the heavens are not clean.

Others again, whether present or absent I leave you to judge, others are at ease in Zion, owing to the soundness of their principles, and the settled orthodoxy of their faith. They love the Church. They love its worship. They love the bible. They love to hear its most solemn truths delivered with Christian boldness, tempered with Christian charity and affection. At least, they think they love them; nor have I the slightest cause to regard them in the light of hypocrites; it being one, among many seeming paradoxes, to be able to perceive the right, and yet pursue the wrong. But oh! what is faith, unless its spirit stirring influence shall be exerted upon the heart? What doth it profit, to have deeply inscribed upon your memories, to have rigidly adopted by your reason and judgment, doctrines, and creeds, and confessions, which are incontrovertibly true, if there is to be no glimmering of practice to mingle with this sunshine of the law and gospel? Faith cannot save you; for, "if it hath not works, it is dead, being alone." Expressions of love to God for his mercy, and gratitude to Christ for his redemption, cannot effect it; for true love is the fulfilling of the law; true gratitude must control the actions of the beneficiary. And all this is insufficient to rob you of your ease. You are ever hearing, ever learning, ever believing; but never acting.

Dreadful inconsistency! Wonderful and unrivalled folly! How shall we account for it? The subject is not new to me. It has occupied my thoughts for a length of time. Week after week, month after month, year after year, have I preached to you the gospel of the kingdom. I have not designedly kept back one truth, that could be profitable to you. I have prayed, that ye might receive all truth into honest and good hearts, and that it might bring forth in you

much fruit unto perfection. And yet, with comparatively few exceptions, it has proved like the dropping of water upon burning embers, exhaled as soon as fallen. The gay have continued to be gay; the procrastinators to procrastinate; the self-complacent, venial offenders to offend; last and most to be admired, they who believe, whose abstract faith is unimpeachable, to content themselves with mere believing. How then, I repeat, shall we account for it; for the paradox of a true faith without its corresponding fruits; morality indeed, but not religion; that kind of religion, which brings us humble, penitent, and contrite to the foot of the cross; which is permanent, as the Church is permanent, and publick, as the sacraments of the gospel are permanent?

I have but one reason to assign, and though others may concur, I think it will be found to reach the conscience of the hearer. Ye never pray. I speak not of publick prayer. I speak of private. In the silence of the night, in calm seclusion, either by night or by day, ye lift not up your hearts to God, confessing your sins, and earnestly and perseveringly pleading for pardon and forgiveness. Ye may indeed use the words of prayer; but there is a principle absolutely essential to recommend those words, and this, notwithstanding all your orthodoxy, I fear is wanting; ye pray not in faith, believing; ye are too much at your ease in Zion to address the throne of mercy, in the confident hope and belief, that mercy the loveliest attribute of God will be shown to you. For, is he not a God, that heareth prayer? Is he not rich in mercy to all, that call upon him? "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear, saith the Lord." How evident then, that this one thing ye lack; this one all powerful magnet, that as certainly draws down the blessing of God upon the prostrate, believing soul, as does the polar magnet the vibration of the needle to a point.

Are ye then, Brethren, prepared to admit, that I have truly probed this flagrant incongruity to the core? Oh! that I could persuade you to commence with enlarged hearts the prayer of faith. If there is any thing, that can remove our spiritual lethargy, it is this. If the general, lively voice of praise and thanksgiving is to be heard among such as keep holy day, it is to be attributed to the preparation of the heart in men. After the example of Christ and his Apostles, an example, that whatever others do, is enough for me,

I will not cease to trouble your consciences in publick, with every forceful topick of religion; and in private, if ye desire it, as it is your duty to do, will I impart the little experimental knowledge I possess of heavenly things. But remember, that vain are the best efforts of the pulpit; vain the best counsels and advice of the ministers of Christ, if the hearer is still secure and confident, undismayed and unabashed. And what I say to one is urged upon the consideration of every class of sinners. "Wo to them that are at ease in Zion." It is the curse of the Church, the destruction of myriads upon myriads of immortal souls. So long as it exists, nothing good, nothing effective, nothing holy, can spring up in the courts of the Lord's house, or convert its waste places, its barren desert, into a fruitful field. But the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. It prevails to turn away our eyes, lest they behold vanity; to chide home our wandering thoughts from the false lights and shadows of time, and to fix them where they are always best concentrated, around the throne, and about the mercy seat of God.

With him for our Friend, there can be none to molest or to make afraid. He is eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; he is marrow to the bones; he speaketh peace and comfort to the soul. "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" The gayety of the sinner will expire. They that "chant to the sound of the viol;" they that "drink wine in bowls," cannot put far away the evil day. If impenitent, it must come; it will come. The ease of a few short years is followed by "darkness, death, and long despair." May Almighty God in his mercy grant, that we may never realize the sad and mournful destiny. May we learn to be wise from experience, and to grow in grace, through the manifestation of the Spirit in our hearts. May our faith be strong, our repentance lively, our obedience perfect. "So iniquity shall not be our ruin;" the love of ease, the treacherous snare of our souls. We shall be happy while we live, happier when we come to die. Yea, though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we shall fear no evil: For thou, O God, shalt be with us; thy rod and thy staff shall comfort us. The pang will be momentary. The inheritance which awaits us, "incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." AMEN.

SERMON XXX.

MATTHEW xi. 28.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

THE circumstances attending the preaching of Jesus were in many respects similar to those existing at the present day. The charm of novelty, if indeed it was a charm; the voice that spake as never man spake; the ocular demonstration afforded by the undeniable evidence of miracles; all these have unquestionably passed away, and in their room remain, the oft repeated truth; the uninspired speech of men of like passions with yourselves; no other corroborating testimony, than the still small voice, which whispers to the conscience of the hearer, "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself;" in other words, whether it be true or false. Still however, Brethren, the essential features in the characters of men, have not materially changed. There are sinners now, as then. There are many, as invincibly attached to deep rooted prejudices, as were the Jews of old. There are many, who listen to the preaching of the word with an equally idle curiosity, prompted more by the manner than the matter, by modes of speech and action, rather than the imperishable truths of scripture. Exactly as it was with those, who enjoyed the ministry of Christ and his chosen Apostles, it may be said of those, who now listen to the word of reconciliation, "Some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not."

Under these circumstances, so obviously similar, that none can seriously question the veracity of the statement, what then should be the prevailing course of the present ministering servants of Jesus? They should endeavour as far as practicable to follow his example. In the discharge of their publick duties, they should not take for their guide the practice of erring man. They should not strive to soar upon the breath of popular applause, or to inhale its incense, as the merited reward of their services. But taking Him, for their pattern, who knew all things in heaven above, and in the earth be-

neath, they should preach the gospel of the kingdom, in the inspiration of his Spirit, in the excellency of his doctrine, and especially in the truly appropriate and characteristick language, which fell from his blessed lips. And what was that? It was emphatically the language of invitation; "COME unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

He never employed force. He never resorted to art or stratagem. Loud and stormy vociferation was unknown to him. He disdained the idea of persons being collusively enlisted to fight in the warfare of the good fight; of being bribed as it were to rally round his standard, and impart to it the splendour and renown arising from numbers, rather than solid piety and increasing holiness. Sweetly indeed did the gospel trumpet sound. Richly did the accents of moral persuasion dwell upon his tongue. Anxiously and freely did he fulfil the prophecy; "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" He rose superiour to all considerations of personal ease and security. He never omitted, in season or out of season, to rebuke and admonish, to exhort and persuade, wherever there were minds to enlighten, hearts to sanctify, souls to save. Never did he forget his own divine annunciation, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

And yet, so far as I can judge from the history of the four evangelists, instead of seeking and saving sinners after the manner of some popular expedients now in vogue; instead of appealing to the self-complacent pride of the human heart, by actually repairing to the houses of individuals, and constantly inculcating from house to house the invaluable doctrines of the cross; instead of such winning methods to conciliate the general applause, his ministry was open and publick. In the audience of assembled multitudes, he announced the great and glorious objects of his mission; explained to them, that he was "the way, the truth, and the life;" and affectionately entreated them to flee from the wrath to come, by a timely exercise of the graces of repentance, faith and obedience. And was a deep impression made upon the minds of his hearers? Were they convinced, that he was "a teacher come from God," upon the principle assigned by a ruler of the Jews, "No man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him?" I cannot find that he resorts

ed to proselyting, domiciliary visits; that he followed them to their several homes, for the purpose of renewing his discourse, and establishing them in the faith. But precisely according to the invitation, "COME unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden;" they came. Such as were sick and diseased, if incapable of personal exertion, were brought by their friends into his presence, and he healed them. Such as were conscious of the more dangerous maladies of the soul alike repaired to him, and were alike relieved. Instances of the kind crowd upon our notice throughout the narrative of his wonderful works. The halt, the sick, the blind, the impotent, the deaf and dumb, thronged from all quarters around his person. He did not visit the young man in the gospel. As you have heard this morning in one of the lessons from the scriptures, Nicodemus, a master in Israel "CAME to Jesus by night." There are few or no exceptions. If he entered a house, he was invited. If he went about continually doing good to the bodies and souls of men, it was to those, whom he casually met upon the road; whom he found among his auditors in the numerous villages of Judea, or whose cases were represented to him, by their friends and relatives. If he was frequently with the family at Bethany; with Lazarus, and Martha, and Mary, it was after they had enrolled themselves in the number of his faithful followers. If his preaching was attended with success, it was upon the principle, "All that the Father giveth me shall COME to me." If his warmest appeals to the hearts and consciences of sinners were unsuccessful, it was said, "Ye will not COME to me, that ye might have life."

And need I tell you, Brethren, that the course thus adopted by Jesus, and sanctioned by his spotless example, is still obligatory upon his ministering servants; that they should preach in the same publick manner; that they should call upon sinners in the same affectionate language to come unto him and be saved; to come unto him in the only assignable mode since his ascent into heaven, with teachable minds and contrite hearts, with minds ready to receive instruction, and hearts disposed to evince its commanding influence in the conduct of life? Need I tell you that, hearers are equally bound on their part to conform to the practice of the primitive disciples; that they should come to the sanctuary of Christ, and hear the words of the Lord; that, when convinced of their supreme value, their imperious necessity, and desirous of em-

bracing the overtures of salvation, they should not hesitate, through diffidence or distrust, from making known the workings of faith and repentance, from repairing to the ordinances of their divine Master, and learning how good and pleasant a thing it is to be godly?

Surely, Brethren, these are principles, that the hearers of the gospel should universally entertain; and am I told, that they require private, as well as publick instruction? Be it so. I shall wage no war with a truth authenticated by the history of the Church in every stage of its existence; and what is the inference, the only just and rational conclusion? Those hearers do not expect from the physician of the body, that he should go about inquiring into the state of their health, whether sick or well; whether they are threatened with consumption, or are prostrated by fever. But as the sick and diseased were accustomed to resort to Christ, so they resort to the practitioners of the healing art. And thus should it be with the maladies of the soul; thus, whenever convictions of sin have been produced either by perusing the scriptures, or listening to the doctrines enforced from them, by the ambassadors of Jesus. To them, inquirers should apply, if they desire additional instruction. It is a practice sanctioned by the great Redeemer of souls, who knew what is in man; who was perfectly aware of the internal effects of his preaching; and who still confined himself to inviting the weary and heavy laden to come to him. Whereas the knowledge of his ministers is limited. They cannot penetrate the hearts of their hearers. They cannot ascertain with a glance, who are moved, who are unmoved, by those operations of the Spirit, which follow in the train of their pastoral admonitions. They can only be put in possession of these things, through the medium of oral or written communications. Come then to them. Ask from them no more direct invitation to come to Christ, than that which is contained in the text, in the scriptures generally, and in their publick ministrations. For the residue, if necessary, if doubts require to be removed, good desires to be encouraged, wounded spirits to be soothed, apply to them. Wretchedly unworthy of their office and ministry must they be, if after the example of Christ, in the case of Mary Magdalen and others, they cannot, will not, anxiously endeavour to help you forward in the right way, which leadeth to everlasting life.

For the expression of these sentiments, and believe me, Brethren, they are expressed with an ardent solicitude for the welfare of your souls, and that you may no longer shrink from the path of duty by delaying to witness a good confession before God and man,—For the expression of these sentiments, I have, as you must perceive, the unequivocal authority of the fountain of all authority. It is indeed highly gratifying to reflect, that such is the construction given to the practice of Christ, by our truly venerable and Apostolick Church, when having recited the sacramental qualifications, she directs these words to be used by each of her pastors inviting his flock to the reception of holy mysteries, “If there be any of you, who by these means cannot quiet his own conscience herein, but requireth further comfort or counsel; let him come to me, or to some other minister of God’s word, and open his grief; that he may receive such godly counsel and advice, as may tend to the quieting of his conscience, and the removal of all scruple and doubtfulness.”

Nor let it be forgotten, that the general propriety of these remarks is confirmed, by a reference to the individuals invited by our blessed Saviour. For to whom, did he address himself? “Come unto me all ye, that labour and are heavy laden.” Had he spoken to the careless and impenitent, his language would have been, repent ye of your sins; believe in me; make your ways and your doings good. He would first have wrought conviction in their minds, and then have exhorted them to cherish that conviction, and exhibit it to the world, by taking up his cross and following him. But in the present instance, his hearers were already alive to their former errors. They perceived the fallacy of trusting in their personal righteousness, their strict observance of that law, which no man has kept; which no man can keep. They felt what too many of us perhaps never feel, that they were sinners; that they had been guilty of many great and heinous provocations; that they had indulged many foolish and inordinate lusts. And therefore did they labour, therefore were they heavy laden. The sense of guilt was a weight, that pressed not lightly upon their consciences. It gave them unfeigned, it gave them poignant sorrow. Their peace of mind was disturbed. Their recent love of the world was unsusceptible of being revived, either to change the current of their thoughts, or to delude them with objects of pretendedly

greater value, than the health and salvation of their immortal souls. Sin was rather to them, as it ever ought to be to us, a sore burden too heavy to be borne. It revealed to their weeping eyes a deluge of wrath, from which they sincerely desired to be relieved, and yet knew not the mode, were yet desponding, yet vainly struggling against the overbearing torrent, which threatened to involve them in the wide vortex of temporal and eternal death.

How grateful then to their ears must have been the compassionate voice of Jesus inviting them to come to him, to take upon them his easy yoke and light burden, and in this manner find rest to their souls. Doubtless, they rushed at once into his embraces. They replied to his summons with the same alacrity, that a timorous flock flies at the call of the shepherd, to experience his protection, when a natural enemy prowls the adjacent forest, or soars aloft ready to pounce upon his prey. And such should be the feelings, such the present refuge of the innumerable throng of conscious sinners. To this condition, they must be brought, ere they can cordially desire to come to Christ. When it has arrived, to his arms they must repair, before they can experience the healing virtues of Gilead's balm and Bethesda's wave. If they will not come to him, he will never go to them. At the gracious call, the simple, affectionate invitation of the gospel, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden," if they will not gladly avail themselves of the opportunity to shake off the galling fetters of sin, and rejoice in the liberty wherewith Christ would set them free, the glorious liberty of the new born sons of God, then, their hearts cannot be right in his searching eye; there must be some large remainder of corruption lingering there; some fond, unsuppressed attachment to their earthly Delilah's; some lurking infatuation entirely at war with the noble sentiment of St. Paul, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;" with the pious effusion of David, aspiring after still greater perfection, "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments."

The whole spirit and genius of Christianity is indeed mild and gentle, as the Lamb of God, its Author. Its very threats are conceived in mercy and compassion. Its promises are gilded with rays of inconceivable lustre. Its invitations are accompanied with the warm fervours of infinite and ineffable love. And what more can

tongue demand, or heart require? Why, as a spoiled child is caressed and coaxed by the doting mother, do we wish to be flattered and courted to the discharge of our duty; to the belief and performance of those things, which we know in our hearts are destined to eventuate in everlasting felicity? God of heaven! How long wilt thou bear with our proverbial indisposition to serve thee; with our perpetual shifts and excuses; with our interminable loiterings and delays; with the prayers and praises, from which it would seem, as if we had known thee, for a long time, to be our great delight and exceeding joy, our reconciled God and Father in Jesus Christ; but alas, the manners, the habits, the actions, which virtually contradict all this fair appearance, and that should serve to convince us, that we are none of thine, no sincere and devoted followers of thy beloved Son. Oh! that we truly repented and laboured; that we were truly heavy laden with the consciousness of excessive guilt. Our first step would be obedience, and it would be our last. We should rejoice in the victory we had gained over sin, and leaving to others all those false and meretricious pleasures, which follow in the rear of appetite and passion, our delights would transcend all earthly gratifications, in the enjoyment of pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father. Others might insist upon being baited and wooed to its profession by parasites having a dexterous tact in all kinds of blandishment; but we should act from principle; there would be no fascination in our religion, and no idolatry; we should have an eye of faith to repose on the great Captain of our salvation, and the sacrifices of a broken and contrite spirit to be voluntarily offered up on the altar of God.

Especially, Brethren, should we be thus alert and guileless in performing our incumbent duty, when reminded of the inestimable benefits resulting from a cordial, and therefore a successful approach to our living Head. "Come unto me all ye, that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." For, on the supposition, that the character here delineated belongs to you, can you reasonably expect to be delivered from its wretchedness, by an application to any other physician, than the great Physician himself? Go to the world, and by the world, I mean its gay enchantments; its dangerous lures, whether of business or amusement; its deceptive maxims and pernicious errors,—Go to this world, and instead of its affording the slightest prospect of substantial

peace and happiness, you will only be tempted to renew all those criminal indulgences, which have already caused you to mourn over the faults and follies of departed days. It would be like the insanity of him, who travels due east or west upon the equator to escape the burning heat of the sun, or the presumption of the soldier, who rushes to the cannon's mouth to rid himself of the fear of death. Go wrap yourselves up in the miserable shreds and patches of infidelity, and instead of the promised blessing, the time will assuredly arrive, when from the stupor it throws around the soul, you will awake to new and more aggravated horrors. They will probably overtake you, while yet probationers in time; most certainly, when the long, long agony of eternity shall have commenced. But to those, who from the heart accept the overture of Christ, not one of his promises fail to be realized. As the weather-beaten mariner reposes from the toils of the ocean, after having gained his destined port; as the impatient traveller revels in the luxury of a cool, pellucid stream, with the parched desert in his rear; so do they, that labour and are heavy laden, enjoy the fruition of that rest, which Jesus offers, and the imperishable institutions of his kingdom and grace ensure. Their sins are vanquished. Their sorrows, springing from this source, have ceased to flow. In the race for glory, and honour, and immortality, they have left them far behind. The fresh and smiling days of infant innocence begin to dawn anew. Brighter, and yet brighter, suns arise. Precisely as the glorious luminary of heaven, with a soft and mellow radiance, declines in the unclouded west, to reappear with redoubled splendour in the orient sky, they fall asleep in Jesus, with a bright believing prospect of a joyful resurrection and eternal life.

Is this, Brethren, a mere vision of the fancy, or is it fact? Do Christians merely seem to be happy, or are they really so? From their lips, the answer is invariably of a nature to justify the universal reception of our most holy faith. It enables them to rejoice in prosperity, and it is their never failing solace in adversity. But lest this statement should be questioned by those, who never experienced the refreshing, heart-reviving influence of religion; lest the felicity of the Christian should be attributed to an unusual flow of animal spirits, rather than to the alleged passage from spiritual death to spiritual life; let us survey a scene of all others

less likely to consist with self-delusion; a scene where every man becomes better acquainted with his own heart, than at any previous time; where truth is almost certain to prevail, and consequently the actual sentiments of the soul to be disclosed. I allude to the scene afforded by the bed of death, and am confident, that while many of the dissolute and profane, the wise in their own conceit, and deriders of every thing sacred and venerable, are alarmed and terrified at the extremity to which they are reduced; while they look back with weeping and mourning to the annals of a life squandered in vanity or something worse than vanity, and forward with indescribable agony to the expected retribution of an angry and incensed God; while they are thus alarmed and terrified, the truly righteous are found to be even happier in the day of their death, than in any, the most prosperous moments of their mortal existence.

Then indeed does religion appear to them, in all its divine and transcendent glory. I have seen, that it smooths every wrinkle produced by care and anxiety, and composes every feature of the countenance to correspond with the peace and tranquillity, which reign within. I have seen, even with the constitutionally timid, that they have no fears, no terrors, not even the slightest shade of doubt. I have seen, that our last enemy is regarded in the light of a friend come to terminate the pilgrimage of a weary life, and with the same spear, that pierces the heart, to point out to the soul the avenue to eternal day. Yes, it is with such feelings, such happy premonitions that the righteous die, and God grant that our last end may be like theirs. Whatever the wicked may think of their lives; however, throughout this period, they may be inclined to substitute austerity and gloom, the absence of pleasure and the presence of pain, as more truly indicative of the rest promised in the text to Christians, than happiness; still it must be admitted, that their peaceful departure, contrasted with the fearful exit of the wicked, clearly evinces the truth of Christ, and the perverseness of those, who will not have him to reign over them.

To the enjoyment of a living and a dying, a present and a future rest, they that labour and are heavy laden; they that acutely feel and would gladly escape the venom of sin, are therefore affectionately invited by our gracious Redeemer. And is it not enough to induce them to cast down their burden at the foot of the cross?

Is it not amply sufficient to cause them to embrace with gladness the proposal made for their good, and worthy of all acceptance? Must the offer be renewed over and over again? Must they with other sinners be persuaded and repersuaded? Must certain forms of etiquette and ceremony be rigidly observed, ere they will consent to be happy: ere they will come to Christ, and allow their souls to partake of the rest procured through the warmth and fervency of a Saviour's love? Alas, Brethren, a better return than this would well become the objects of his benevolence. To him, it would be better for you to repair with the velocity of the arrow to its target. And do ye still refuse: still exact greater condescension on his part; that he should even stand at the door of your several hearts and knock, after repeated applications have remained unanswered, or only answered with ungrateful denials of admission? I know not but he may. I do not positively know the extent of the divine forbearance. But the course adopted by the Son of man throughout his ministry, and upon which I have enlarged in the commencement of this discourse, implies, that when he calls, ye are to answer without unnecessary delay; when he says, "Come unto me," ye are to enter into his rest, without debating in your minds about the suitableness of the times and seasons, in which the message is delivered by his ministers. From his own mouth it was announced before assembled multitudes. The example is still followed by his faithful ambassadors, and sure I am, that if ye do actually labour and are heavy laden, by reason of repented sins and a contrite spirit, ye will not put his long-suffering mercy to further trials; ye will not hesitate openly to avow him for your Master, to wear his livery, and glory in his service.

In the verses succeeding the text, he described that service, as an easy yoke and a light burden. For once then summon to your hearts sufficient confidence to believe in him. Let the world call it irksome and severe, a restrictive system contrived with the view of marring human happiness. But for once have the good sense and resolution to think, that ye may judge and act for yourselves. Are ye fearful and timorous, anxious indeed to be found in the path of duty, and yet apprehensive lest your best efforts should prove unavailing to ingratiate yourselves with Him, whose grace and favour are most to be desired? Permit me to say, that never was there a gentler master, than our Saviour Christ, to beam with the eyes of love and complacency on obedient servants. He is not hard, that

he should reap where he has not sown, or gather where he has not strewed. He it was, who passed so high an encomium on the poor widow's mite. He it was, who declared that a cup of cold water given to his little ones should in no wise lose its reward. Take courage therefore, all ye that labour with distrust, all ye that are heavy laden with despondency. Be of good courage and a confiding heart. Come to Christ, and he will give you rest. He will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly; from them that love him and keep his commandments. **AMEN.**

SERMON XXXI.

2 TIMOTHY iii. 4.

Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.

THE great lexicographer Johnson, among other definitions, tells us, that pleasure is "delight, the gratification of the mind and senses." And what are the senses? They are so many avenues to the mind; so many purveyors collecting from the vast magazines of nature and of art, whatever can charm and captivate; whatever gently move, or intensely thrill, the soul with ecstasy. Taking the above definition for our guide, I shall therefore in the ensuing discourse submit a few observations, with the view of placing in its true light, a subject more talked about, than understood; more used to decorate a pulpit harangue, than to convey plain, practical, and sound instruction to the understanding of the hearer.

In endeavouring to effect this object, my first inquiry will be, Are there any pleasures, that are innocent? I answer in the affirmative. There are many; so many, that to reckon them up in order would not be less difficult, than it would be to count the stars of heaven, or number the hairs of the head. How much idle declamation there is to the contrary, I need not urge. In the distorted vis-

ion of some men, all pleasure is sinful, all pleasure unworthy, not merely of the holiness of the Christian, but of the dignity and the glory of man. They listen to the melody of the woods, and in that melody, they perceive no harm. They observe the pastime of the aquatick tribes, the gayety of every animal, that God hath made, and they discern no evil. But let the animal man only smile, and it becomes a crime. Let him wear a cheerful countenance, that best index of a good conscience and a rejoicing heart, and he is condemned to herd on earth with sinners, and to perish everlastingly in hell with reprobates. As if Almighty God really intended, that while all the lower orders of creation should spontaneously rejoice in their Maker's love, the highest link in its long extended chain; the noblest, because the only intellectual and responsible among his creatures, should clothe his brows with gloom, and soil his cheeks with perpetual tears. There can be no greater absurdity. Pleasures the fairest and the purest surround us on every side. In this manner our benevolent Creator clearly reveals his inclination and his will to promote our happiness.

If you take an infant, healthy and vigorous, how little cause have we, surveying his innocent gambols, the sports springing from the impulse of untutored nature, how little cause have we, to pronounce of God, that he denounces pleasure and exults in pain; how little to proclaim of Christ, that he intended to deprive us of every amusement, when his declaration was, "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." If you take an individual in the full maturity of his faculties, and throughout the entire range of his relations, the same observations apply; or, why is not every thing acrid to his taste, and odious to his sight, and noisome to his smell, and dissonant to his hearing, and repulsive to his touch? Reply is needless. The pleasure of eating is not made criminal, because we feed on sweets; of seeing, because we are charmed with beauty; of smelling, because we breathe the fragrance of the rose; of hearing, because we are delighted with musick; of feeling, because we enjoy the texture of velvet. I find no such sins enumerated in the oracles of God. I do not find any thing vicious in the innumerable joys, which pertain to domestick or social life; to the warm attachment cherished for the partner of our bosoms; to the fond caresses bestowed upon our offspring; to the cordial grasp of friendly hands.

Misanthropes may condemn these things; but search the scriptures, and instead of condemning, they enjoin them, they enjoin love to all mankind.

Nor can you there discern the slightest prohibition of purely intellectual pleasures. If we may not read Milton, and Young, and Cowper, because they have sought to please the ear with the harmony of numbers, then is the poetry of Isaiah, then are the lyrics of David, sinful. If all works of moral fiction are to be abjured, what are we to do with the allegories of the prophets, and the parables of Christ? If the study of natural philosophy is to be discarded, why is it written, "The invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead?" And thus I might proceed through the infinite variety of objects calculated to gratify the mind and exhilarate the senses. So far from being interdicted by God, they were made by him; they were devoted to our use; they were designed to contribute largely and liberally, though not exclusively, to our felicity.

Are there any pleasures then that are sinful? I once more reply in the affirmative. There are many. I will dispose of them in three classes. First, all those that in their nature contravene the laws of God. The Romans for instance were inveterately attached to the shows of gladiators. They were perfectly enraptured with the mortal struggle, and the successful combatant received unbounded applause for the dexterity, with which he pierced the heart of his antagonist. And so, among the moderns, similar exhibitions sometimes prevail. The fashionables, or rather the fancy, of England have become proverbial for their pugilistick encounters, occasionally terminating in death. With us; they only substitute beasts and fowls for men. But there is the like depraved taste, the like vicious enjoyment. We have no divine warrant whatever for inflicting unnecessary pain upon inferiour animals. They may be justifiably destroyed for food, or owing to their mischievous character. But all wanton destruction is highly criminal, and all wanton cruelty. I allude not merely to the sports of the fowler and the angler, when pursued with no other object than amusement. I include the rac-ground, subjecting the noblest of all our domestick animals to a large amount of pain. With what view? To gratify a passion for gaming; to please the thoughtless and inconsiderate with a display

of speed, which, every day of their lives, they may witness far surpassed by the flight of birds; and this, without whip or spur, gasping lungs or panting sides, bleeding veins or foundered limbs. Oh! which of our number, seriously reflecting upon such scenes, can have the heart to encourage, by his presence, so cruel a perversion of human power; one, notwithstanding the usual pretences, so utterly destitute of beneficial tendencies, so fraught with those that demoralize society, and to a very great degree impair the kindly feelings of humanity? If I remember right, the mild and amiable Claudius is said to have become a monster of barbarity, owing to the frequency, with which he gratified the populace of Rome with gladiatorial combats.

The second class of pleasures, which are sinful, are those that, originally innocent in themselves, become the reverse through excessive indulgence. We may drink wine, or the grape would not have existed; Paul would not have written this prescription for Timothy, "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities." But to become inebriated; to intoxicate the senses with the fumes of liquor; to put out for a time the light of the mind, is eminently iniquitous as well as pernicious. It is perverting to unhallowed purposes what God intended for good. It is seeking pleasure beyond its just limits. It is returning the bounty of Providence with personal shame and personal degradation. And all excess in pleasure, if not to the same extent, is in a similar point of view evil, and therefore forbidden. When we trample upon the modesty of nature; when we exceed her moderate desires, yielding all our faculties to amusement, and all our members as instruments of time and sense, vice is necessarily engendered, licentiousness prevails without a license, and guilt without excuse. On perusing the parable of the rich man, I do not discover, that he was condemned for his knavery or his ferocity; for the violence of his anger or the vindictiveness of his revenge. He was merely voluptuous and convivial. "He was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day." Still however, after death, "in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." He is excluded from heaven. He is not allowed to plead in justification of his conduct, the craving of his appetites, the enticing character of his enjoyments; that at most, they only injured himself; that, arrayed against many other offences, they were comparatively

lustful and venial. But an useless, extravagant, and luxurious life is manifestly condemned, and fated to terminate in everlasting destruction. He enjoyed his good things here, and Lazarus with evil things was afflicted; but in the issue, the latter is comforted, and himself sorely tormented. You cannot, Brethren, require a more convincing proof, that God hath set bounds to our gratifications, over which man must not pass, or only pass to ensure an eternity, in which to weep and lament, to writhe in anguish and shudder in despair.

The third class of sinful pleasures are those, which, however virtuous in themselves, fail to obtain the approbation of heaven owing to the disposition, with which they are embraced and pursued. My meaning is, that as enjoyed by some, they are vicious, and by others, virtuous; although to the human eye there is no shade of difference, and no symptom of excess. I have already remarked upon the pleasures derived from the domestick relations, and, as an abstract proposition, it would be the height of folly to contend, that we should not dearly love such as are united to us by the nuptial and kindred ties. It is rather concordant with nature, and with the word of God. "Husbands love your wives." "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Suppose however, that the affections of a man are altogether engrossed by his family connexions; suppose, and I apprehend it is a very common case, that he loves them better than he loves his God; the Father, who made him; the Son, who redeemed; the Holy Ghost, whose office it is to sanctify all the people of God: Is this right? Is this being holy, harmless, and undefiled? Assuredly, Brethren, most assuredly, sin lieth at that door. An innocent passion becomes the opposite, because it stands alone; because it is selfish and improvident, unaccompanied by gratitude to the founder of families, an intenser glow of devotion towards him, who hath said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." And thus, precisely thus, with every other kind of virtuous pleasure. This passage furnishes the principle upon which to estimate the real merits of our domestick attachments, and the text speaks a similar language in reference to whatever else can properly allure the mind or ravish the senses. They, that are lovers of pleasures, far the

greatest in number and variety, far the richest and purest in their nature, are not sinful on this account. God the rather approves it. He hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servants. But they are sinful, because they are lovers of pleasures MORE than lovers of God. MORE, you perceive, is the comparative and the emphatick word. So that, if you show me the man, who prefers Him, whose favour is life, whose loving kindness is better than the life, who prefers Him to every thing else; I care not what are his pleasures, or with what eagerness they are pursued. It is morally impossible, but that they are innocent, free from every stain of guilt, and without offence. He cannot at the same time love God and love sin.

Under other circumstances, he would be a sinner, though apparently pure and spotless; though you could not charge one vice upon him, nor detect the smallest impropriety in the nature, the manner, or the time of his amusements. But God, who searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins, is fully aware of his inward predilections. He does not object to his fondness for the social circle; to the ardour with which he follows his occupation in life; to the taste he exhibits for letters and philosophy; to the cheerfulness and hilarity with which he enters upon his daily round of recreations, corporeal and mental. But he objects, that these legitimate pleasures are not entertained in subordination to the love of him: that their votary thirsts for them, transient and summary as they are, more than he thirsts for him, the living God; that completely absorbed in them, he cannot say with the holy David, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee."

Yes, Brethren, here is the grand distinction to be observed on this much abused and ill debated subject. A sinner goes forth to his pleasures with his whole soul bereft of every other thought. He eats and drinks with no saying or feeling of grace to the Lord. Awake or asleep, he is alike dead to his love and reckless of his bounty. Walking or riding, talking or musing, reading or writing, self is the idol of his affections; self is connected, in some way or other, with all his emotions, and all his pursuits. God is not in all his thoughts, or is only permitted to dwell for a moment there, unhonoured and unglorified by serious meditation, by devout aspira-

tions, by grateful remembrances, and therefore he remains a sinner. But the Christian uses this world as not abusing it. He has a hymn of praise for every delight, a tribute of thanks for every blessing. He enjoys the fair face of nature; he participates of the good cheer and the hospitable board; he meets his friends with the smile of welcome, and the heart of sympathy; he takes up an amusing volume, and peruses it with lively interest; and still in these, and all other pleasures, he knows full well, that they only endure for a time; that they cannot save the soul alive; that they are embraced by him with undiminished affection for his God and Saviour; and therefore he remains a Christian, therefore his heart, faithful and sincere, still fondly turns to the divine fountain, whence all the various streams of joy are commissioned to flow.

With the preceding remarks, dismissing a rapid survey of the second branch of the discourse; another general inquiry may be summed up in the question, Are there any pleasures, which are either innocent or sinful according to circumstances, involving for example the consideration of time and place? I am very free to reply in the affirmative, and am no less confident than free. Amusements, that would be proper and harmless in most places, are highly offensive and blameworthy in the temples of God. These are entirely unsuited to levity or diversion. While the congregation are engaged in their devotions, while the preacher is occupied in delivering the truths of the everlasting gospel, for individuals, as the manner of some has been, to be employed in whispering and even conversing aloud, in opening and even reading other volumes than those appropriated to our solemn service, is not merely a breach of decorum towards the worshippers of God in his holy temple, but also a direct affront levelled at the majesty and glory of God himself. It is irreverent in its nature, faithless in principle, and disgusting in practice. "How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God and this is the gate of heaven." "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." These are the declarations of the bible, and consequently every look, every attitude, every gesture, every expression, militating with them, betray either thoughtless folly or spiritual unconcern. Here every muscle should be composed in solemnity, and every spirit subdued in devotion. "O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the

Lord our Maker." Curiosity should not bring us here; we should come to praise and pray, to listen and improve; our attendance should be early, and the disgraceful practice of retiring, before the services are concluded, held in just abhorrence. "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil."

Similar remarks apply to the sabbath day. It is as much, ay, it is more profaned by amusement, than it is by labour. And yet, how many refrain from business, who refrain not from finding their own pleasure, often as it returns to remind us of the Lord of the sabbath, and of the publick homage he now requires of all, that are fed by his bounty and protected by his care. By some, it is wasted in idleness and languid ease; by others, in needless visits, in "foolish talking and jesting, which are not convenient." Others again, soon as the rising sun prognosticates a fair and pleasant day, immediately plan an excursion for recreation and merriment. They are not satisfied with what the preceding week has enabled them to enjoy. They must encroach on sacred hours, and contribute, all in their power, to obliterate from the memory of man, this standing and authentick memorial of divine revelation, of the truth of our religion, of the existence of a Being highly exalted above all principalities and powers; alone deserving our adoration and praise: alone worthy to be had in perpetual remembrance. But these things ought not so to be. There is no mere worldly enjoyment, that is in the smallest degree adapted to the duties of the holy sabbath. Though it may be sinless at other times, it is sinful now. Though it may escape present retribution, there is a day approaching, when for all these things God will certainly bring the transgressor into judgment; when he will visit him with the rod of his anger, and consume him with his hot displeasure.

Our final inquiry will be directed to those pleasures, which are evidently entitled to be considered the wisest and the best. What are they? I contend that they are such as are spiritual and heavenly. All others come to an end. They transcend not the confines of the grave. When a few more years are come, it will be nothing to us, whether we lived in prosperity or in adversity; whether we were fanned by the breeze or ruffled by the storm; whether we lived with the wife of our youth, and the offspring of mutual love, or

early buried them, far from sight and hearing, beneath the clouds of the valley. In the case of the righteous, the morn of the resurrection will tranquilize every sorrow, and equalize every joy. Their fate hereafter is not determined by the lights and shadows of time. There the pious rich and poor meet together, alike rich in God's grace and mercy, alike removed from the vicissitudes of life, and clothed with the garments of salvation. Give me then, O God, exclaims the Christian, a relish for pleasures allied to results so glorious and divine, and I will esteem them of more value than my necessary food; of more intrinsic worth than all else, that the eye can covet, or the heart desire. Sooner than fail to obtain them, I am content to be poor and needy, afflicted and chastened, desolate and forsaken. I long for thee, O God; my soul doth wait for thee, as a thirsty land for the refreshing dew and genial shower. Oh! shed abroad the light of thy countenance upon me, and give me the help of thine arm, to lead me on the road to heaven.

Nothing indeed can be more futile or preposterous, than the commonly received opinions upon the influence of Christianity. It is thought to interpose an insuperable barrier to all real enjoyment; to be clad in black and enveloped in clouds; to be dismal and gloomy, mournful and melancholy, with every other epithet adapted to express the sorrows of a wounded spirit and a drooping heart. But, while it is suited to every temporal source of felicity, how obvious on a little reflection must it be, that the pursuit of those pleasures is necessarily productive of the greatest gratification, which are known to continue through life, and after life to last forever. And these are the pleasures of religion. Christians feel, that they have a mansion prepared for them in heaven. Can this give them pain? They are conscious, that in its bright abodes, there will be no stinted joys, no scanty measure of enduring bliss. Is this likely to move their souls to sadness? As well and better might you doubt the happiness of an infant sheltered by the maternal arms, or the felicity of a bride upon her nuptial morn. No, no, there are none on earth to compare with the righteous in the elevation of their hopes, and the brightness of their presentiments.

“ Fired at the prospect of unclouded bliss,

“ Heaven in reversion, like the sun, as yet

“ Beneath the horizon, cheers us in this world;

“ It sheds on souls susceptible of light,

“ The glorious dawn of our eternal day.”

They possess a treasure, which the world can neither give nor take away. They have the faculty of contemplating the thing that shall be, and the privilege of drawing upon resources there, which fill up the vast extent of their desires, and like the widow's cruise of oil, that never fail.

"Some joys the future overcast, and some

"Throw all their beams that way, and gild the tomb."

In drawing to a conclusion, suffer me then, Brethren, to hope, that the few thoughts thus hastily collected together may be found to present a fair account of that pleasure, which consists in the "gratification of the mind and senses." Regarded in its true aspect, it may be justly said to constitute "man's chief good on earth," and is so far from being denied his possession, that "light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart;" is so far from being sinful, that the moment our attention is directed heavenward, one wide immeasurable ocean of felicity is forthwith announced as the inestimable reward of well-doing. Does this look, as if God would willingly grieve and afflict the children of men? If he holds out as an incentive to holy obedience, that in his presence is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore, Does this indicate to the Christian, that he is to go sorrowing all his days; that those, who are the ransomed of the Lord, are to go to Zion, with tears and sighs, and not with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads? I have not so interpreted his precious promises. I have not so understood Paul, where he saith, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice;" nor Peter, where he describes the saints of the Most High anticipating the coming of the Son of man, "Whom, having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

At the same time, Brethren, I would have you distinctly understand, that these remarks are not designed to hold out the least ray of encouragement to the "lovers of pleasures more than the lovers of God." As they choose to live without him in this world, so they must be content to live without him in the world to come. He affords them no hope of future happiness. They can extract none from the admonitions of his faithful ministers. Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, do rather threaten them, and if they repent not, if they will not bring forth fruits meet for repentance, are as certain of overtaking them in the end, as God is true, his

word divine, his judgments righteous, and his power omnipotent. Have ye therefore but too much reason to include yourselves in the number of those, who have the temerity, and I may add the folly, to advance the pleasures, which consume as they sparkle, higher in the graduated scale of their love, than the First and the Last; He, who was, and is, and is to come; without whom there can be no real happiness here, and must be inconceivable pain hereafter? Oh! that ye might be persuaded to abandon these false delights, these meretricious pleasures. They are unworthy the name. They are no better than lying vanities. They will otherwise separate between you and God. They will beguile you of your immortal souls, and consign you in death to the communion and fellowship of beings, the smoke of whose torment ascendeth forever and ever. But only change the object and the current of your affections; become ye the lovers of God more than the lovers of pleasures, and then.

“ Though tempest frowns,

“ Though nature shakes, how soft to lean on heaven!

“ To lean on Him, on whom archangels lean!”

Ye will experience more true pleasure in one such hour, than ten thousand spent amid the sated joys of sin. Ye will commence that course of fruition, which shall never end. Ye will be happy in life, happy in death, happy in eternity. Your last look on earth will be followed by the vision of eternal joy. AMEN



SERMON XXXII.

JAMES ii. 19, 20.

Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

IT will be remembered, by those of your number, who were present upon the last sabbath, that I had occasion to advert to the fact of its being far easier to believe than to obey. The subject under discussion did not permit me to exemplify at large the truth of the proposition. This deficiency I shall now endeavour to remedy.

fully persuaded that there is no greater error committed by the present ministering servants of Christ, than a predominant anxiety to dwell upon the doctrinal to the almost total exclusion of the practical concerns of our holy religion. I know the cause, and weak and timid minds, ignorant and half learnt theologians, are extremely apt to yield to its insidious influence. I allude to popular opinion. For a long time its current has set very strongly in favour of purely doctrinal disquisitions. What is termed an improvement is indeed tolerated at the conclusion of a discourse; but then so brief and meager, that the well-instructed in opinions are scarcely taught the most common duties and charities of life. The impression has even gone abroad, that moral discourses are a disgrace to the pulpit, and clearly indicate the absence of a spiritual mind, on the part of the preacher. Under such circumstances, I need not tell you, that it requires no inconsiderable share of resolution and firmness to stem the torrent of prejudice; to declare the truth as it is in Jesus, and loudly call upon the sinner to "awake to righteousness, and sin not." Preachers are but men. They have the hopes and expectations, the passions and infirmities of men, and wishing to stand well in the general esteem, especially with those of their own party, they insensibly, if not designedly, adopt a course of instruction, which their own better judgment should condemn; which the example of Christ himself, the greatest and plainest of all moral preachers, ought to convince them is decidedly at variance with the interests and the wants of the hearer.

Not however to anticipate the closing remarks, it is my intention to submit, I shall proceed at once to the proof of the assertion, that it is far easier to believe than to obey. Let us look at the actual condition of things, wherever the Christian religion is embraced. In common with some, if not most other systems, it has its foundation in the great and glorious truth, that there is a God. If you abstract him from its records, the grand and majestick edifice, we have been so long accustomed to regard with wonder and admiration, is deprived of its base; you demolish it at a blow, and so thoroughly, that, like Jerusalem of old, not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down. But who is there to disbelieve in the existence of God? I know of none. I never knew the man, who openly denied it. If, in scriptural language, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God;" if a few wretch-

ed philosophers have occasionally appeared and attempted to palm this gross falsehood upon the credulity of the world, it has certainly possessed the good sense to reject the absurdity; it has never fallen a prey to those baleful meteors, that would fain have extinguished with their lurid fires the Light of Lights. They have rather sunk into merited obscurity, attracting a momentary gaze, owing perhaps to the thick darkness in which their feeble lamp was set, and then disappearing to deepen yet deeper the gloom of an eternal night. If it had not settled down into a truism, that there is no general rule without its exceptions, we might safely say, that such a being as an atheist does not exist in Christendom to outvie the iniquity of the very devils, who believe and tremble.

As it is, the belief in God must be admitted to be nearly universal. But when you come to the duties consequent upon that belief; when you cast your eyes over the busy throng of men, and justly appreciate the principles by which they are governed, oh! how slightly are their hearts inflamed with the love of their heavenly Father! How feebly does the glow of gratitude pervade the bosom of the best of them! How greatly do the numbers preponderate, who in ten thousand times ten thousand modes hesitate not to violate his laws, and virtually defy his power! Speak to them of the perfection of his character, of the holiness of his name, of the riches of his goodness, of the reasonableness of his worship, and they will immediately assent to the justice of every position; they will for the most part acknowledge every thing, that a pious man would wish them to acknowledge; but the moment his back is turned, they forget his counsel; they fly from their own serious thoughts, and consign to oblivion the obligations of reverence and affection, of honour and allegiance, of praise and thanksgiving. They can even take the holy name of God in vain, and, with now and then a fearful pang of remorse, unconcernedly do those things which they know in their hearts contravene his will, and provoke his just indignation against them. You will not pretend, Brethren, that I am here giving a coloured statement. You must be sensible, that it is no libel upon our common humanity. And what does it prove? What is the fair inference to be drawn from the simple fact, to which I have called your attention? It establishes beyond all controversy the facility, with which belief is entertained, compared with the difficulty, with which obedience is practised

An observation that applies not more certainly to its great Author, than to the system of divine truth he has deigned to disclose. What man is there amongst you, who does not call himself a Christian? Who is there to disclaim the appellation, and to prefer one of a less distinguished rank? In our biblical world, with the exception of a few Jews, serving to fulfil the sure word of prophecy; with the exception of a few infidels seldom caring to encounter the odium of publick opinion, and rarely dying in that unhappy persuasion, we all consent in some shape or other to the truth of the bible, including the gospel of Christ. Look at its circulation, there is no other volume to compare with it in extent; at its perusal, sooner or later it attracts the eyes of all; at the institutions by which it is accompanied, the spires of innumerable Churches by their heavenward ascent would seem to rival the prayers of the faithful, they adorn our proudest cities, and in the bosom of the wilderness are, in themselves respectively, as a city set upon a hill, which cannot be hid. Christianity is therefore fastened upon us by a tie, which nothing earthly can rend asunder. It is to the righteous, as an anchor to the soul both sure and steadfast, and to the unrighteous, as a fee simple lying in abeyance, which at some future time they fondly calculate will fall into their possession.

And still, notwithstanding this general belief, this mental acquiescence in the truth of scripture, the multitude do not cease to do evil; they are not afraid to any good degree of amazement, when they are engrossed by the affairs of this world, and the lusts of other things; when they pursue with avidity the mere pleasures of sin, and even perpetrate the higher acts of enormity. And I desire, no one can reasonably desire, any better evidence to convince the judgment, how much easier it is to credit the theory, than to excel in the practice of our religion. If we could only contrive to do what we know and believe we ought to do, society would soon wear a new face, and put on a more beautiful appearance, "Thy walls, O Zion, would be "called Salvation, and thy gates Praise."

To the evidence already adduced, the evidence of facts seen by the eye and heard by the ear, reason also unites her testimony, and assures us, that it is easier to believe than to obey. The great elementary truth of the bible is scarcely pronounced before the mind approves it. The idea of God is almost intuitive. As a first proposition, his existence is certainly sooner credited, than that of

any thing incapable of ocular inspection. With some, the devil is a creature of the imagination. With others, it is doubtful, whether the rolling orbs of heaven are inhabited or not. But reason tells us, that wherever there is an effect, there must have been an antecedent cause. The universe is formed, and Who made it? is an inquiry, that leads us at once to One supreme in power. It abounds in features disclosing the most gracious and benevolent designs; designs indicating a desire to promote the happiness of all living things, and we adopt with enthusiasm the opinion, that our God is good, and that his tender mercies are over all his works. In this manner then, reason teaches us to admit as an incontrovertible truth the existence of the Deity. We do not, cannot, doubt it. With the light of nature and the volume of inspiration to inform us of the duties he exacts at our hands, we are also capable of perceiving the verity of these declarations of David, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple: the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes: the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." We have only to examine them attentively and seriously, and our reason is perfectly satisfied, that for the promotion of our real felicity, "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb."

Why then are they not suffered to control our lives and conversation? When the mind is persuaded, that our greatest good demands it; when we feel, or if too young to feel, when we cannot look abroad, without discovering that evil pursueth sinners, and causes all their mental and corporeal "beauty to consume away, like as it were a moth fretting a garment," Why do we not, in compliance with the counsels of our own understandings "cease to do evil, and learn to do well;" cease to betray, and learn to secure our best and noblest interests? I have no difficulty in referring you to the only true solution. It constitutes another link in the chain of evidence already submitted, that it is easier, far easier, to believe than to obey.

I draw the same conclusion, often as I reflect upon the bias of our natural inclinations. There is no such constitution of our minds and hearts, as leads us to vacate the throne of the universe, and sub-

stitute the operations of a blind fatality, for the power and wisdom exerted over the works of creation, by the God of the Christian. We rather consider it an honour to be permitted to use the endearing address, "Our Father, which art in heaven." It is a source of gratification, that our origin is thus elevated and august; that the nature of the relationship here claimed is thus auspicious and divine. To be called the children of chance shocks our reason. To be stigmatized as the children of the devil rouses our indignation. But to be entitled the sons of God, the children of a heavenly Father, is both soothing to the pride of the sinner, and grateful to the humility of the saint. Nor does it prove revolting to our natural inclinations, that life and immortality have been brought to light by the gospel. The soul is decidedly anxious for another state of existence. Though destitute of a written revelation, the ancients dwelt with transport upon a future Elysium in the presence of the Gods; the modern savage exults in the thought of happier skies and a lovelier, purer region, in which to follow with keener relish his wonted pleasures; while in our own case, ere the sinner becomes so preposterously wicked, as to presage nothing else but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour all the adversaries of God, I take it upon me to affirm with the utmost confidence, that the idea of annihilation afflicts and corrodes; that the consciousness of immortality expands and gladdens the heart. We do not want the body to lie forever in cold obstruction; much less can we endure to think, that the soul shall forever sleep the sleep of death.

So far however as the influence of our inclinations on the conduct of life is observed, we do not perceive that it maintains the ascendancy it ought to produce. There are numerous exceptions. There are multitudes of the wise and good to look, with all the singleness of heart it is possible for man to exercise, to the final recompense of reward; to the final enjoyment of "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." But still, how many others exist, who rest contented with the knowledge and belief that such things are, without putting forth their best and noblest efforts to secure the same glorious prize. Some perhaps upon the principle, that future punishment is no more than the crude conception of the pulpit. But not all, not unfrequently have I heard individuals admit the reality of future and eternal inflictions, who have not

withstanding dared to continue in the course of sin, which they foresaw must either terminate in repentance or everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. And how are we to account for it? What better solution can be given than that, which it is the object of this discourse to impress upon your minds? If it is as easy to obey, as it is to believe, motives surely are not wanting with such men. They have the highest that can be brought to bear upon human volition. They have a heaven to gain, and a hell to escape. But alas, poor, frail, and inconsistent humanity! while in relation to the concerns of good and evil, of life and death, it discerns the better, it is only to pursue the worse, career. The habit of sinning has at length become so strong and inveterate, that religious duties, however pleasing in theory, are far too irksome in practice. Sinners cannot away with them. Flesh and blood cannot consent to forego their sensual indulgences, although the mind be sadly conscious, that their tendency is present ruin, and the end everlasting woe.

Again, Brethren, we have a better knowledge of our faith, than we have of our practice, and this renders the former easier of acquisition than the latter. You may think it a bold proposition, but in the sense in which it is urged a little reflection will convince you, that nothing is more susceptible of demonstration. For to commence with our great Creator, I do not mean to assert, that, either in this world or in the world to come, we can possibly attain to a perfect knowledge of the majestick essence and glory of the Infinite. To this extent, we cannot “by searching find out God;” we cannot “find out the Almighty unto perfection.” “The secret things belong” unto him, and those only “which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever.” But then, when nature indicates, and the bible proclaims, that there is a God, I perceive my faith to be compelled in a manner, it is impossible to overcome. I perceive also, that it is not in the slightest degree impaired, owing to the impracticability of going behind the record, and endeavouring to ascertain what is clearly transcendental in its nature. I do not believe in God the less firmly, because I cannot comprehend him. I do not cease to ascribe to him all glory, and honour, and dominion, and power; all wisdom, and knowledge, and purity, and holiness; all grace, and mercy, and benevolence, and love, because I am incapable of conceiving, much more of delineating, the unfathomable depth of these adorable attributes. Who for instance

can master the idea of self-existence, or of eternity? And yet, who does not believe, that God is both self-existent and eternal? If I take a diamond in my hands, before crediting its actual presence to my sight and touch, I am not obliged to describe, what cannot be described, the manner in which it was manufactured in the workshop of nature. Nor do you disbelieve in the round world, because you cannot tell how it was created out of nothing. Faith in God depends not therefore upon a perfect knowledge, and when once entertained is perhaps the less subject to fluctuation from the very circumstance, that clouds and darkness rest upon its object; that he is verily a God that hideth himself.

Similar remarks are applicable to those other fundamental doctrines of the scriptures, which make the largest demands upon our faith. On examination, I am satisfied upon their simple assertion, that, in consequence of the fall, we are naturally inclined to evil; that the Son of God, in the likeness of sinful man, did die upon the cross for the purpose of procuring our redemption, and washing away our sins in his atoning blood; that there are eternal rewards for the righteous, and eternal punishments for the unrighteous, after this painful life is ended. But if you ask me, why it is thus; if you wish me to give a reason, where God has preserved an unbroken silence, I am free to acknowledge my incapacity. I cannot transcend the limits of the scriptures. I am indeed satisfied with what is written, and have no desire to travel into the boundless regions of fancy and conjecture. But these observations are made with the view of convincing you, that when the inspiration or heavenly origin of the bible is once clearly ascertained and established in the mind of the Christian, his faith is not weakened through inability to comprehend what is incomprehensible; but he reposes with perfect confidence in the divine truth and justice; in other words, he easily believes in doctrines delivered with, and resting upon, authority alone. Their remote philosophy, he leaves to be settled and vindicated by the unerring wisdom of heaven.

It is when his practice is materially affected by the limited amount or the uncertain character of his knowledge; it is then, that he encounters the greatest difficulties experienced in this life of trial and temptation. Were all the commandments of God of a negative nature and obligation, it would not be thus? "Thou shalt not kill." for example, is easily understood, and when broken, the vio-

tation is as easily known. "Thou shalt not commit adultery: Thou shalt not steal: Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour," are of the same class. But let us advert to one of a positive description, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," and no little thought and reflection are requisite to comprehend all the duties it imposes upon our observance. The man in the gospel was obliged to inquire, "who is my neighbour?" and although our Saviour has satisfactorily determined this, in the beautiful parable of the good Samaritan, yet the measure of our love to be evinced towards others, in the various intercourse of life, is a subject, that can by no means be disposed of, in the twinkling of an eye. Even when properly adjusted, there is a vast amount of pride and selfishness, of passion and prejudice, to be subdued, before we can arrive at the rigid and undeviating performance of what we have determined to be our duty. We have an enemy malicious and revengeful, for our neighbour, and we are to love him. But in what manner? What will constitute a discharge, and what a failure in relation to our obligation? We have another, that is our friend, but at the same time the slave of vice and pleasure. Are we to reprove him at the risk of incurring his wrath? Shall we not fail, materially fail, if from merely personal apprehensions, we do not faithfully apply what the scriptures term "the wounds of a friend?" A third is poor and needy, sick and diseased. Can you calculate precisely the extent of your required benevolence? Having calculated, can you give it with cheerfulness, remembering that God only loves a cheerful giver? A fourth has been subjected by us to undeserved reproach. Do we always hasten to repair the calumny? Do we heartily regret the injury he has sustained? Do we never play the hypocrite in our professions of sorrow for his wrongs? And so I might proceed through an almost infinite variety of cases, all depending upon this one command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," and many of them demanding the strictest attention every day of our lives, in order to convince you, that the moral duties of religion are far from being very feasible, far from being as easily accomplished, as has been too often fondly imagined.

I might also remind you of some other positive duties; "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength:" "Add to your faith, virtue: and to virtue, knowledge: and to knowledge,

temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity." "Put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Are all these easy to understand, throughout the wide expanse of their application? If understood; Are they easy in their fulfilment? I have not so learned Christ. I have thought, that for every admonition to believe, he had a hundred persuasives to virtue, and dissuasives from vice. And to what are we to attribute it, but to the prevailing disposition of the sinners of his time, so severely reprov'd in the words, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Those titles they could give with the utmost facility, but how to perform that which was good, they knew not. Hard, unconscionably hard, to them was the saying, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." This was the criterion by which his true followers were to be known. And did they fail to endure the trial? No loud, enthusiastick, and boisterous cry of Lord, Lord, could prevail with him to predict their final entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

On the whole therefore, Brethren, it would evidently appear, from the numerous considerations, which have been presented, that it is far easier to believe than to obey. It may however be said, that the faith referred to is not genuine; that it is merely historical and speculative. But this, so far from answering the argument strongly confirms it; strongly proves, that no matter what may be the ardour, or what the orthodoxy of our professions, they can avail us nothing, unless they are accompanied by the more arduous fruits of a holy living. "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" Will ye know, O ye preachers of the everlasting gospel, that, if from timid counsels, and an inclination to obtain a good report among men, ye are found to countenance a pernicious error, by evincing an inordinate attachment to mere doctrinal discourses, and by refraining from inculcating those moral and religious duties, which are most difficult to be discharged, whether they relate to God or man, Will ye know, that, under these circumstances, ye deceive the hearts of the simple, and

that the consequences are extremely liable to prove supremely fatal to their present and future welfare?

For my own part, Brethren, so long as I am permitted to enjoy the honour of being an ambassador for Christ, this consideration will never be absent from my mind. I will use every precaution, lest any man's blood should be hereafter required at my hands, through an unpardonable failure to preach obedience, as the most important and comprehensive feature in the Christian life. I know that faith is essential; that it is imperative. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." I care not how strongly, how distinctly, it is enforced. But in what manner is it to be secured? You must not speak to me of a surer mode than this; through obedience. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him. Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law?"

What better evidence then can be required of the extreme fallacy of extolling faith at the expense of works? The faithful and true Witness did not charge those Israelites with disbelief in God. He knew, that they believed in him, and in his word. But alas, like many modern professors, their faith was barren and unfruitful, and he therefore charged them with not keeping the law given by Moses. "He that hath an ear, let him hear;" let him say unto himself, as ye are doubtless all prepared to say, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord," with all the remaining acknowledgments of the creed. But what of this? "What doth it profit, my Brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?" Verily, verily, I say unto you, that "as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." Ye must "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." Ye must "let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." The task is difficult, so difficult, when compared with simple faith, that I cannot but tremble for our common safety; I cannot but think, that its non-performance will prove the ruin of myriads, whose belief, re-

sembling that of the scribes and Pharisees, would secure a similar commendation from our gracious Redeemer, "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not." Notwithstanding its difficulty, the task then must be executed. God requires it, and our final Judge hath said, "Behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be." Oh! that we might be universally prepared to meet him, with joy and not with grief; "that denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we might live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." We should have no cause to regret it here below, and at length falling asleep in Jesus, we should in due time become partakers of the same joyful resurrection. "Blessed are they, that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city," the glorious CITY of their God. AMEN.

SERMON XXXIII.

REVELATION xiv. 11.

And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever

THE eternity of that punishment, with which Almighty God will hereafter requite the ungodly and the sinner, is the subject of the present discourse. Do you ask me, Brethren, why a theme so repugnant to the feelings, so diametrically at war with the desires and inclinations of the heart, should be selected by the Christian minister, and enforced upon the solemn and serious attention of his audience? I demand of you, in reply: Why the considerate parent is accustomed to address himself to the hopes and fears of his children? Why, at the dawn of paternal authority, does he talk of reward and punishment, reward to the obedient, punishment to the disobedient? The former is unquestionably pleasing and encouraging to the young aspirant, desirous of basking in the soft sunshine of a father's love; but the latter, how does

21 chill the gushing tide of filial fondness! What painful apprehensions does it excite in the minds of truant youth returning from the pastime of forbidden pleasure! How many and how great the terrors, with which it clothes the paternal brow! Why then resort to it? Why venture on an expedient, so harsh and repulsive to the smiling features of childhood; so withering and oppressive to the gayety of youthful indulgence? You will perhaps tell me in the words of scripture, "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth;" ere he can be supposed to comprehend the evil results of early transgression; the certainty with which it blasts the fair promise of our blooming spring, and entails upon the winter of our age a host of calamities, terrible to contemplate, more terrible to endure.

Yes, Brethren, upon these principles, you would justify threats, you would justify coercion; and you do threaten, you do coerce. Those of you that are fathers would otherwise seldom realize the truth of the psalmist's declaration, "Lo children are a heritage of the Lord; and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the band of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them." They would not gladden your hearts by their virtues. They would scarcely fail by their vices to pierce them through and through with many sorrows. By this analogy, easy to understand and difficult to obviate, you are therefore put in possession of one of the most prominent of those inducements, which are ever inclining Christian ministers to startle the ear of conscience with a voice proceeding from the regions of despair, "I am tormented in this flame." And does it require some high authority to excuse our boldness? We gain it in the example of St. Paul, "knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." Nay, we gain it in the example of Christ himself, predicting the doom of the wicked, in the day of his second coming, to judge the world, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Deprive the pulpit of this awful language, and you would deprive it of the most powerful instrument, it wields for the conversion of sinners. Heaven and its glories would not prove an adequate substitute: For whether righteous or unrighteous, mankind would in either case enjoy its perpetual felicity. But when righteousness alone tendeth to life, and unrighteousness to death, eternal: when the infallibility of these

truth is clearly and unanswerably established, the two passions of hope and of fear are alike excited. They constitute the throbbing pulses presented to the spiritual physician. Touch the one, and it is beguiled by the brightest visions; the other, and it is alarmed and terrified by the most horrid presentiments, that ever fill the human mind.

Imagine however, that, beyond the grave, all was heaven: Who would seriously devote himself to the attainment of its already certain joys? Imagine, that all was hell: Who would vainly strive to avoid its sure perdition? Alas, Brethren, when their combined appeal too often fails to search the spirit, and improve the heart, it is easy to anticipate the general depravity consequent upon the expulsion of either from the sacred records. But now, the desire of the soul to return to God, who gave it, is materially quickened by an anxiety to flee from the wrath to come. It even requires less fortitude to forego the idea of future happiness, than to be reconciled to the thought of endless and unutterable woe. It is wise then, in the ambassadors of Christ, to speak openly and freely upon this appalling theme. It evinces a love for souls, that is neither neutralized by the modified censures of the gay and inconsiderate, nor abashed and confounded by the severer rebukes of the scorner. And as to the effect; if men will not be won to obedience by the inspiring promises of the gospel, they are not unfrequently plucked, as brands from the burning, by calm and temperate views of the pains and penalties of eternal death. They may be fond of sin; but for its wages they have no sympathy. They may be content to wear its insignia upon their foreheads; but to rest not day nor night, to be thoroughly persuaded, that, upon final impenitence, "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever;" all this has a wonderful tendency "to loose the bands of wickedness;" to prevail with them to cast off its galling chains; and, with new thoughts and new desires, to strive earnestly for the new heart and the new spirit, so loudly demanded in holy oracles.

At the very threshold of this argument, I am however met by the old, I wish it were universally considered the stale, device, "Ye shall not surely die," dressed up, and, if possible, gilded with additional art and subtlety. For has the world become too enlightened to be as easily duped, as our first parents were, by the smooth and honied accents of the Prince of lies? In the room of entire indem-

city, the sinner is now more usually cheered and flattered in his headlong career, by promises of an eventual termination of the punishment to be hereafter inflicted on his soul. The early stratagem of the devil is for the most part rejected, and, following his more recent example in the temptation of Christ, the scriptures themselves are perverted to the uses of fraud and seduction. They are acknowledged to contain denunciations against the wicked, imperative and excluding as this, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." But then everlasting does not mean, everlasting. Eternity is not, eternity. They are as much limited in relation to the future, as when expressly employed in reference to the present. Hath God said unto Abraham, "All the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever?" In point of duration, he means no more, when in our text, he assures the wicked, that "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever."

Wretched, miserable sophistry! Suffer yourselves, Brethren, to be ensnared by this delusion; make up your minds to believe, that there is no distinction between eternal, everlasting, and forever, as applied to time, and the same words, as applied to the period, when time shall be no more; and the consequence is, that as it was said by the prophet, "the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow," so may it be said of the everlasting perfections of God. No longer, in the usual acceptation, can we speak of his eternal power and glory, of his being the everlasting Father, and God blessed for ever, even from everlasting to everlasting. In the employment of these terms, we have been altogether mistaken and deceived. All these divine attributes, this power and this glory, this perennial blessedness, this endless duration, are to be hereafter as completely scattered, as "the everlasting mountains were scattered," and as "the perpetual hills did bow." Will you agree to this only fair construction, this ultimate extinction of your Creator, your Preserver, your reconciled God and Father in Jesus Christ? Can you tolerate the idea of living and of being happy in the spiritual world, as the sinner professes to live happy in this, without God, without the light of his smiles, and the riches of his grace?

I will even suppose the righteous to be capable of such base ingratitude, and still, there are questions of some moment to be canvassed and determined aright. Where is the warrant for this hap

piness? Where is the warrant for immortality itself? Do you point me to the scripture, which asserts that there shall be a transmission of "the righteous into life eternal?" I present you in the same verse with the equally explicit declaration made of the unrighteous, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." Where then is the distinction? In the original Greek, there is none. The same word is translated by the synonymes, eternal and everlasting. So that, if the one is to be pared down and diminished to signify a limited period of punishment; the other must be subjected to a similar process, in relation to reward. Happiness will have an end. Misery will have an end. Our boasted immortality either becomes a farce, or else the impassable gulf must be crossed, and that too, by the just as well as the unjust. Their places will be changed, and their respective conditions reversed. The miserable will be happy, and the happy, miserable.

Yes, Brethren, such are the consequences of tampering with the oracles of truth; of moulding them to correspond with the inclinations of sinners; of refining upon their legitimate construction, so that we may retain, through false, delusive hopes, the privilege of calling evil, good, and good, evil. I defy any man to prove from the bible the abatement of one particle of eternal death, without at the same time diminishing the duration of eternal life. And although the poor sinner, determined on all occasions to pursue the phantom pleasure, may little regard the inevitable inference, Where are the righteous, prepared to adopt it, prepared to be satisfied with a portion of future happiness, that, however long and ravishing, is still destined to vanish away, and be no more remembered? There are none, no not one. The soul clings to the hope of immortal felicity, as its best sheet-anchor, amid the storms and tempests, which crowd upon the voyage of life. It seeks not a fading and perishable, but an unfading and imperishable crown. It reposes not upon the God of the dead, but upon the God of the quick and everliving spirit.

Nor is this the only objection to the forced interpretations, to which I have referred you. If it is possible for us to think of eternal punishment, it is certainly possible, that the Almighty has ordained it. And if, notwithstanding all that is affirmed to the contrary, it should finally prove to be thus, you will coincide in opinion with me, that the knowledge of so important an event ought to have

been communicated to the beings exposed to its dreadful retribution. Upon this statement, I ask you then, what more precise and definite language could be employed, than that which is already written? Can you supply God with expressions more significant than eternal, everlasting, for ever and ever? I know of none, or if there be, you have them in the well known sentence, three times repeated in Mark, "their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Do you think, that our liability to misconstrue is not sufficiently guarded against? It is written, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Do you imagine, that the terrors of the dread unknown should have been more strongly contrasted with the idols we are here required to abandon? You cannot construct a figure equally forcible and energetick with this, "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off;—if thy foot,—cut it off;—if thine eye,—pluck it out:—it is better for thee to enter into life maimed,—halt,—with one eye,—than having two hands,—two feet,—two eyes, to be cast into hell-fire." Will you contend, that some examples should have been given of individuals condemned to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire? "The rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes being in torments." He solicits relief, and no relief is granted. Will you affirm, that it was merely delayed? I appeal to the case of Judas, of whom it is said, "Wo to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had never been born." A declaration utterly inapplicable and unmeaning, provided he is to be received up into mansions of unceasing rest and beatitude, after a limited period of suffering.

Before then you renounce the doctrine, that the punishment of the wicked in a future state, never terminates; before you insist, that there is hope for the reprobate, and enlargement for the damned; let me once more inquire, Can you supply the Almighty with verbal expressions, warnings, illustrations, and examples more precise and definite than these? That many persons profess to be wise above what is written, I am forced to admit. But let them bring forth their strong reasons; let them tax their ingenuity; let them ransack their inventive powers, as long as they please, and they will still fail, in strength, in emphasis, in whatever constitutes pre-

eision and certainty, to rival the clear and unambiguous terms, in which the eternal "wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men."

Be it also remembered, as intimately connected with this idea, that if there be no such thing as eternal misery, in the sense for which I contend; Why has the God of all grace and goodness, He, whose tender mercies are over all his works; Why has he adopted language, so fearfully calculated to mislead and agonize his frail dependant creatures? Why did he not rather caution them against an impression, so fatal to their peace of mind, by declaring, that he was too good to punish; too fond and affectionate to cast away sinners everlastingly from his presence? He must have known, that preachers of the gospel would address themselves, as they are now accustomed to do, to the fears of men; that they would frequently cause their eyes to weep and their hearts to bleed, as they freely expatiated upon unspeakable and perpetual torment. He must have known, that many surviving relatives would go mourning all their days, from melancholy forebodings of the eternal perdition of those, whom they once folded in the arms of fond affection. But if it is all a lie, the preposterous invention of fools and bigots; Why did he not, in pity and compassion to our race, remove the fruitful source of many sorrows, by some such language as this, Beware of men, who, while they acknowledge my readiness to pardon the penitent and reward the obedient, are still continually announcing, as from me, that I will by no means clear the guilty; that the wine of my wrath shall be poured out upon them without mixture; that "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever?" Why did he not reprobate them thus, They are false prophets; they lie in wait to deceive; "their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips," and their "mouth is full of cursing and bitterness?" It would have been easy; it would have been reasonable and merciful; it would have been highly becoming and Godlike. And yet, nothing of the kind exists. No one can lay his finger upon a revelation, which, if true, would have been so worthy of the benevolence of God; so grateful and encouraging to the heart of man. Why then this portentous silence, this fatal absence of one consolatory passage, when in the apprehension of a vast majority of the pious and holy, there are so many to annoy the fears, and destroy the expectations of the wicked?

I am at no loss for a reply. I find it early and emphatically recorded in the scriptures, "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Shall he say, that there is no eternity of suffering, when there is? Shall he say to the sinner, that he will not hereafter visit him with consuming fire, when he hath already prepared it for him, for the devil, and his angels? No, no, the eternal God is not thus inconstant and variable; not so much like a man. "He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil;" but then his will and his word never change; they are immutable as are his own perfections. He has created, and he can destroy, eternally "destroy both body and soul in hell." Fear ye therefore him. "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

It may indeed be observed of all those, who apply the flattering unction of universal salvation to their souls, that they are much more inclined to confide in their own conceptions of the character of God; in those general impressions, which they have formed of his matchless goodness and benignity, than in the more detailed and expanded light, which in the holy scriptures is thrown around him, and that preserves unbroken the entire unity and perfection of all his attributes; his purity, his holiness, his justice, as well as his love, his mercy, his compassion. And could I resort to the same mode of unraveling his designs; could I think it becoming a poor worm of the dust to hold up to view one moiety of his character, and at the same time industriously, not to say perversely, conceal the other, I should meet with no difficulty in rushing to the same conclusion. The divine mercy I would laud to the skies. The divine justice I would consign to be managed by those, who, in their efforts to sustain it, are not unfrequently branded with the epithet of fanaticks.

I will go further. I will freely confess, that, so far as reason is concerned, so far as that light of nature which through all her works declares the glory and the goodness of God, nothing would appear so manifestly absurd, and even derogatory to him, as the doctrine of everlasting misery. It is not visible in the pleasant sunshine, in the refreshing shower, in the variegated tints, which

sparkle from cloud to cloud, and at length converge into a bow of promise. It is not inscribed upon the innocent face of nature, its fertile bosom and redundant harvest. It is not engraved upon the tablets of the mind, the integuments of the heart, or the substance of the soul. All these things do rather clearly testify, that God is love; that he is our Maker and Preserver, our constant Friend and heavenly Father. Restricted to them, I would not hesitate to assert, that let our conduct be what it might, good, bad, or indifferent, we should still experience in every change from life to death, and from world to world, that he had not "forgotten to be gracious," nor "in anger shut up his tender mercies."

Even now, with all the light which radiates from the sacred volume, I do not comprehend why it is, that the sins of a few short years, committed in perfect accordance with our natural desires and infirmities, should be recompensed with everlasting inflictions. It does not correspond with my sense of justice. It does not harmonize with those sentiments of affection and sympathy, which I delight to indulge towards my fellow travellers in the pilgrimage of life. Abstractly considered, it has nothing in it to coincide with my reason, to charm my eyes, or to captivate my heart. And yet, I firmly believe it. I firmly believe it to be just, and right, and equitable. Why? Because I yield a hearty assent to the scriptural admonition, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." Because, having investigated and credited the evidence in favour of the truth of inspiration, I there find the sentence of eternal reprobation, so clearly revealed against the impenitent sinner, that he, who runs may read; so clearly, that it would only corroborate my faith, if the divine hand were at this very moment to trace it out, in letters of living light, upon the walls of this edifice.

Away then with all scruples about justice, and right, and equity. If these qualities do not pertain to God, where are we to find them? If we are determined to believe no more than what we are able to comprehend, we shall never believe in this world; we must wait until conviction shall have been wrought through the medium of actual perception. For me it is enough, that God conveys an intelligible proposition, and to this I bow, as confident that it is in perfect unison with all his attributes, as if I perfectly understood his nature, and spied out all his ways. Such is that faith in him, which I wish every hearer of mine to cherish. You may tell me.

that the punishment of death eternal is contrary to our received impressions of the divine love. I agree to it. He is "not willing that any should perish." You may also tell me, that it is contrary to our own sense of justice, and consequently that it must be to his. But here, one word from him outweighs in my mind all the arguments, which human ingenuity ever has or ever will devise. And be the same determination yours. If you credit the scriptures in one particular, credit them in all. If you discredit them in one, you may as well discredit them in all. You can no longer claim to receive them as a lamp to your feet, and a light to your paths. But do they speak of a future state of rewards and punishments? Do they explicitly announce of those rewards and punishments, that they are unchangeable in their nature, and ceaseless in their duration? O! that ye might to the disclosure submit your understandings with reverence; that ye might believe with all your heart, and so regulate your lives and conduct by its intimations, as never to learn experimentally what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God: into his hands, who will so thresh the ungodly in his anger, so vex them with his fiery indignation, that "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever."

Most persons upon this subject have indeed very strange and confused thoughts. They hear of fire, and associate with it the idea of actual combustion; of the worm that never dies, and imagine it to forewarn them of some literal banquet upon the naked soul. But neither they, nor you, nor any human being, can pretend to describe the character or the degree of suffering, which they are employed to represent. Of such and many other images, alike terrific and forbidding, it is sufficient, that they indicate the extremity of torment, torment to the body, and torment to the soul. Who then among us are willing to endure them? Who are willing to enter into that dismal receptacle of the enemies of the cross of Christ, where hope, that lights up all other abodes, is never to dawn upon them; where legions of infernal spirits with the arch-fiend at their head, are to be the sole companions to comfort them, in the severity of their anguish; where the poor, despairing soul shall rave round the walls of the fathomless abyss, seeking rest and finding none; where, in complicated agony and woe, it shall die a thousand times ten thousand, yea, an eternity of deaths? Ah! who among us are willing to endure them, to enter upon this scene of terror and amazement? Are they, the young, the blooming, and the gay?

Where will then be that zest for pleasure, which now "sits high smiling in the conscious eye," or riots through the veins, or palpitates within the heart?—Are they, the mature, the hale, and strong: the fathers and the mothers of the land? Where will ye find the balmy zephyr and the cool retreat, the place for social intercourse, for conjugal love, for parental tenderness?—Are they, the old, the decrepit, and infirm? What gentle filial hand shall smooth the silver locks, or spread the downy bed? What kind and soothing voice shall whisper words of peace and comfort in the anguished ear, or cheer them through the long, long remnant of eternity?—Are they sinners of every class and sex? Where are "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life?" Where, baser vice and more vulgar profligacy? Where, the gibes and scoffs of infidelity? Where, the blessed Saviour and the free, unrestricted overtures, with which this gentle Shepherd would have once allured the wandering sheep into his spiritual fold.

Alas, Brethren, all these things are forever gone, forever fled. They are not permitted to pass the confines of hell. They may be sought for and enjoyed throughout the days of the Son of man. But for those secluded within the realms of darkness, there is no voice to sooth, no eye to pity, no arm to save; there is naught, save "weeping,—and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." Awake then ere it be too late, awake thou that sleepest on the brink of this tremendous gulf, and Christ shall give thee light and life, liberty and salvation, forevermore. On the exercise of a sincere and worthy repentance, he will wash away your sins in the laver of his atoning blood. On the profession of a true and lively faith, he will fold you within the embraces of his sheltering arms. On the practice of a cheerful and holy obedience, he will be "able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." Be ye therefore penitent, and faithful, and obedient. "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" So shall ye escape "the smoke of their torment," which "ascendeth up for ever and ever." "So an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." AMEN.

THE END.

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